Buffy
the Vampire Slayer™

JOSS WHEDON

ANDREW CHAMBLISS

GEORGES JEANTY

BRIAN CHING

JANE ESPENSON

CHRISTOS GAGE

DREW Z. GREENBERG

KARL MOLINE

JEFF PARKER

Buffy the Vampire Slayer™

SEASON 9 VOLUME 2

WHAT IS A SLAYER'S PLACE IN A WORLD WITHOUT MAGIC?

Recruited by ex-Slayer Kennedy, Buffy is gainfully employed by a newly formed company leasing out former Slayers as bodyguards. A Slayer to her core, Buffy struggles to resist her instincts of fighting demons and vampires. Luckily for Buffy, her first assignment has her protecting an Internet mogul chased by assassins from the hell dimensions!

As the zompire epidemic continues to spread through the world, a small California town is overrun by this insurmountable threat just as a new kind of Slayer—inspired by Buffy's strength and her fight against evil—steps up to be a hero . . .

Meanwhile, Willow Rosenberg struggles to reclaim her identity and magic in a quest that leads her to strange new worlds where she'll confront bizarre beasts and reunite with familiar faces. Somehow, against all odds, she must return magic to her world as she confronts her most fearsome foe to date—herself.

"Espenson, Moline, and company have turned out a comic to be proud of . . . it's turned the book into one where I'm eager to see what happens next. All in all, a good show by all parties involved."

—COMIC BOOK RESOURCES

"I'm curious to see Willow continue to take the lead in her own story for a change."

—*WIRED*

"This is one of the funniest and most enjoyable *Buffy* reads yet. It's very bright, techy, and geeky without trying and something that will put a nice kick in your day."

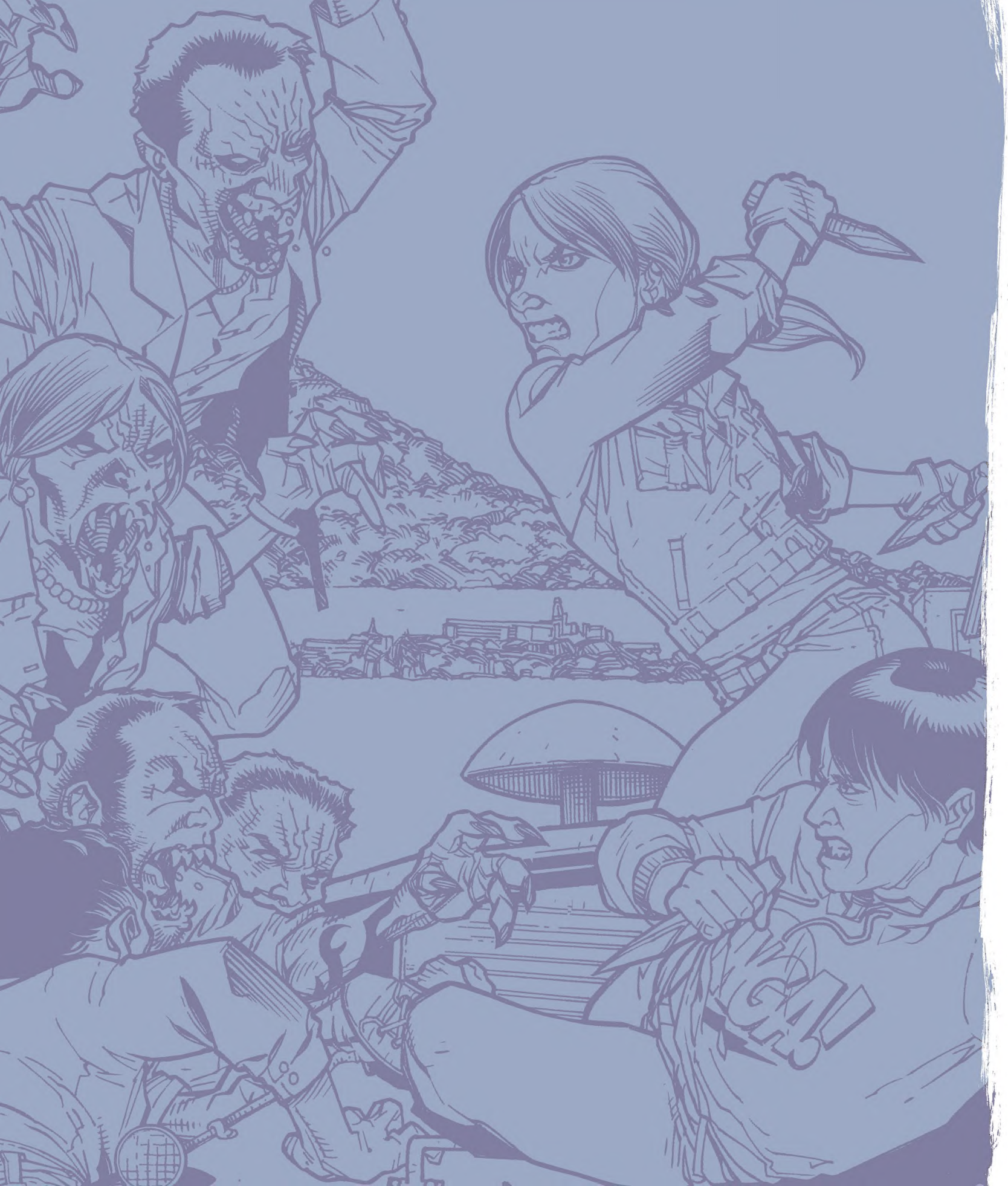
—COMICS GRINDER

"Awesome art, great coloring, and clever wit."

—THREE IF BY SPACE

DARK HORSE BOOKS

Buffy
the Vampire Slayer™



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SEASON 9 VOLUME 2

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JEMIAH JEFFERSON

DARK HORSE BOOKS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

GUARDED 6
Script by Andrew Chambliss, *pencils by* Georges Jeanty, *inks by* Nathan Massengill

BILLY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER PARTS 1 & 2 78
Scripts by Jane Espenson & Drew Z. Greenberg, *pencils by* Karl Moline & Ben Dewey, *inks by* Andy Owens

WILLOW: WONDERLAND 126
Script by Jeff Parker & Christos Gage, *pencils by* Brian Ching, *inks by* Jason Gorder

Colors by Michelle Madsen
Letters by Richard Starkings & Comicraft's Jimmy Betancourt

SKETCHBOOK AND COVER GALLERY 246

CREATOR BIOGRAPHIES 284

noto

AFTER THE SEED WAS DESTROYED, HUNDREDS OF SLAYERS WERE LEFT WITHOUT PURPOSE.

HUNDREDS OF GIRLS WHO HAD STRENGTH, POWER, AND USED TO BE PART OF A SUPERNATURAL ARMY...

TARGET'S CROSSED THE INTERSECTION OF THIRD AND MAIN.

...WERE SUDDENLY TURNED LOOSE ON A WORLD THAT DIDN'T NEED THEM ANYMORE.

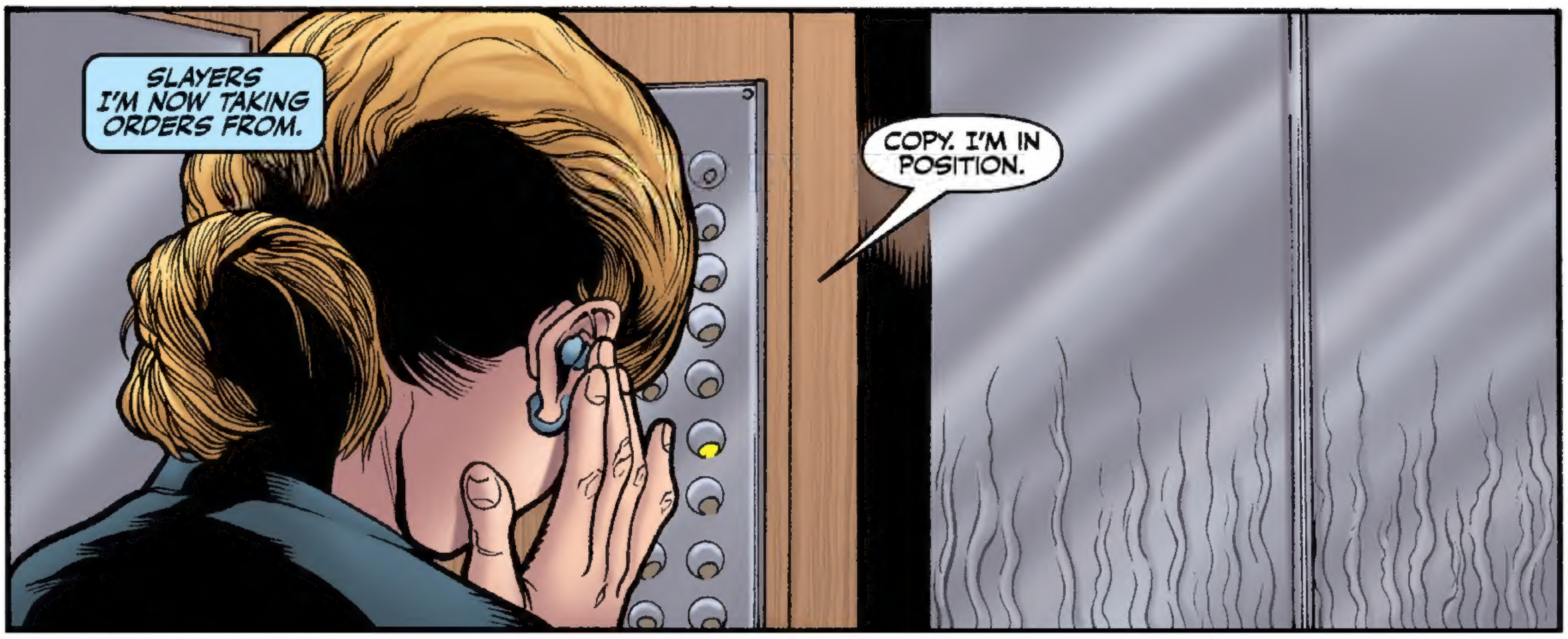
SOME OF THOSE SLAYERS FIGURED OUT HOW TO USE THEIR GIFTS TO MAKE A BUCK.

COPY.

THE TARGET'S CHECKING IN.

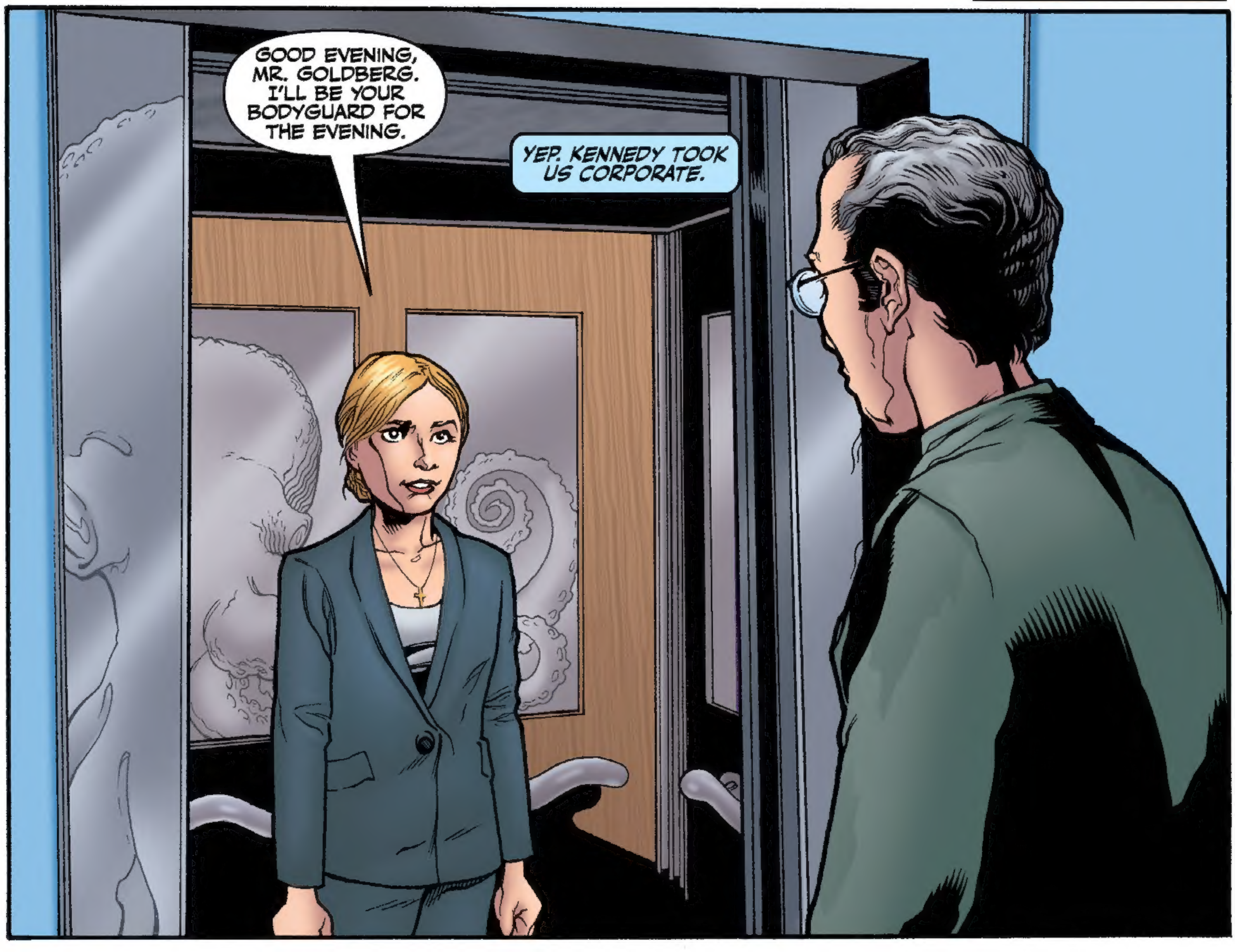
HEADING FOR THE ELEVATOR.

SLAYERS I USED TO GIVE ORDERS TO.



GUARDED

PART ONE



SALARY. BENEFITS. PAID VACATION. AND A 401K.

I'LL BE IN THE ROOM NEXT DOOR.

IF YOU SENSE ANY DANGER, PRESS THE PANIC BUTTON.

CAN YOU HEAR THE GROWNUP IN MY VOICE?

AND I'LL STOP WHATEVER'S MAKING YOU PANIC.

YOU SURE THE COMPANY DOESN'T HAVE ANYONE...

...BIGGER?

I ONLY COME IN BUFFY SIZE.

AND IT'S KIND OF THE POINT. NO ONE WILL EVER THINK I'M A BODYGUARD.

BUFFY, IT'S KENNEDY.

WE'VE GOT SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY ON YOUR FLOOR.

ALREADY?

I HAVEN'T EVEN RAIDED THE MINIBAR YET.

GOT HIM. SCALEY FLAVOR OF DEMON. DISGUISED AS A BELLHOP.

NEGATIVE. A DEMON DOESN'T FIT THE PROFILE.

TALL, DUMB, AND *SPINY?*

WHAT'S NOT TO HATE?

BUFFY, THE DEMON IS NOT OUR PRIMARY CONCERN--

CLICK

GOT YOU!

HOW WERE YOU GOING TO KILL HIM? KANDER POISON? N'LEK DEMON GRIP?

OR--

--HOTEL MINTS?

YOU REALLY ARE A BELLHOP?

SINCE THIS REALM WAS CUT OFF FROM THE CENTRAL HELL BANKS, I'VE HAD TO TAKE *THREE JOBS* JUST TO MAKE ENDS MEET.

EEEEEEEEEE

HAND OVER THE BRIEFCASE.

DROP THE--

BANG

--HUH?

YOU WANT TO WATCH IT AGAIN?

I GET THE POINT. I SAW A DEMON AND LEFT MY POST.

AGAINST MY ORDERS. YOU'RE LUCKY IT WAS JUST A TRAINING MISSION. IF IT'D BEEN THE REAL THING, YOU'D BE ***SWISS SLAYER*** RIGHT NOW.

DID YOU REALLY HAVE TO PUT BLANKS IN THE GUN?

DON'T GET YOUR GUN-HATING PANTIES IN A KNOT. IT HELPED ME MAKE MY POINT. BESIDES, YOU'RE FINE.

CARL IS FINE. AND SO IS TAGORAK.

THEY'RE ACTORS.

SORRY I ABANDONED MY POST, CARL.

I THOUGHT TAGORAK WAS THE ASSASSIN.

HE'S TAGORAK. ***I'M*** CARL. NOT ALL DEMONS ARE BAD, YOU KNOW.

SORRY I DIDN'T TELL YOU IT WAS A TEST, SUMMERS. BUT WE'RE PROVIDING SLAYER BODYGUARDS TO SOME OF THE MOST POWERFUL PEOPLE IN THE WORLD.

DO YOU THINK WE'D LET YOU GO INTO THE FIELD UNTESTED?

SINCE I HAVE SAVED THE WORLD MORE TIMES THAN ANYONE ELSE IN THIS BUILDING...

YES.

A CORPORATE ASSASSIN IN A BAD FRENCH MAID COSTUME SLIPPED RIGHT PAST YOU.

BECAUSE I SAW A DEMON.

AND WHERE THERE'S A DEMON, THERE'S USUALLY FIRE AND BRIMSTONE AND OTHER DEMONY THINGS.

BECAUSE YOU'RE THINKING LIKE A SLAYER.

I *AM* A SLAYER.

ISN'T THAT WHY PEOPLE HIRE US?

PEOPLE HIRE US BECAUSE WE'RE STRONG, SMART, AND GOOD IN A FIGHT.

NOT BECAUSE THEY'RE SCARED OF REFUGEES FROM THE HELL DIMENSION NEXT DOOR.

THEY WANT US TO PROTECT THEM FROM KIDNAPPINGS, RANSOMS, ASSASSINATION EVEN...

SO IF YOU WANT ME TO CERTIFY YOU FOR FIELD WORK, YOU NEED TO STOP LOOKING AT THE WORLD LIKE YOU'RE THE CHOSEN ONE.

TOMORROW.

I'M ON ESCORT DUTY FOR SOME SOCIAL-MEDIA WUNDERKIND.

YOU'LL BE WITH ME. SO STUDY UP.

THERE'S NOT A LOT EX-SLAYERS ARE SUITED FOR IN A WORLD THAT'S MINUS THE MAGIC.

MOST OF US DIDN'T EVEN FINISH HIGH SCHOOL.

BECAUSE WE WERE BUSY SAVING THE WORLD.

OR DOING WHATEVER IT IS WE DID TO IT.

I'M GOING TO STICK WITH *SAVING.*

I JOINED THIS COMPANY TO GIVE ALL THESE GIRLS A SHOT AT HAVING SOME KIND OF A FUTURE.

INCLUDING YOU.

AND, BUFFY, THIS JOB PAYS A HELL OF A LOT MORE THAN POURING COFFEE.

SLEEP ESCAPES YOU?

WHO'S THERE?

SODA

FORGIVE THE LURKING. MOST SLAYERS WOULD ATTACK ON SIGHT.

YOU CAN STAND DOWN.

APPARENTLY, YOUR KIND HAS FALLEN OFF THE SLAYER MOST WANTED LIST.

ELDRE KOH OF THE NITOBE.

WHEN WE LAST MET, YOU HAD BEEN WEAKENED BY THE SIPHON.

DOESN'T MEAN I DON'T REMEMBER.

PLUS, SPIKE TOLD ME ALL ABOUT YOUR UNDERWORLD BROMANCE.

WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN? FOR A MINUTE, SPIKE THOUGHT YOU MIGHT BE JOINING THE SCOOBIES.

SODA

WHAT IS "SCOOBIES"?

NEVER MIND.

SO NOW THAT YOU'RE ON A SEED-MANDATED PAROLE, YOU'RE VISITING ME AT SUMMER CAMP *BECAUSE...*

I SEARCHED THIS REALM FOR THE DEMON RESPONSIBLE FOR MY IMPRISONMENT, BUT I'VE COME UP EMPTY.

I AM LOATH TO ASK, SINCE I AM INDEBTED TO YOU BY THE NITOBE CODE.

LOATH AWAY.

I CANNOT PUT MY LIFE IN ORDER UNTIL I HAVE VENGEANCE. IT IS ALSO PART OF MY CODE.

I WON'T TELL IF YOU WON'T.

I NEED YOUR HELP TO FIND MY ENEMY.

WHY ME?

YOU ARE THE SLAYER--

--WHO'S TAKING A SLAY-CATION.

AND I DON'T THINK KENNEDY WOULD LIKE ME RUNNING AROUND WITH YOU. THIS JOB MEANS I CAN ACTUALLY BUILD A LIFE THAT REVOLVES AROUND THINGS OTHER THAN--

--WELL, DEMONS.

ONE OF THE FEW BEINGS TO HAVE POWER IN A WORLD WITHOUT MAGIC...

...AND YOU TRY TO PROFIT FROM IT.

WATCH IT, LASER HANDS. YOU WANT TO LECTURE A SLAYER ON THE MISUSE OF POWER, GO FIND SIMONE.

ME? I'M TRYING TO GET MY LIFE TOGETHER.

JUST LIKE YOU.

NOW CAN SOMEONE CONVINCE ME OF WHAT I JUST SAID?

'CAUSE GETTING MY LIFE TOGETHER MEANS FIGURING OUT HOW TO WORK FOR KENNEDY.

WHICH MEANS PUTTING ALL MY SLAYER INSTINCTS ON PAUSE.

VAMP

TROUBLE IS...

...NO MATTER HOW BIG THE SALARY, HOW FRINGE THE BENEFITS, OR HOW CUSHY THE 401K...

I CAN'T FIND THAT PAUSE BUTTON.

WHERE DO YOU THINK YOU'RE GOING?

THE INTERNET WHIZ KID LANDS TONIGHT.

WE LEAVE IN FIVE.

THIS IS JUST ANOTHER TRAINING EXERCISE, ISN'T IT?

NO. THIS IS A REAL ASSIGNMENT.

THAT'S WHAT YOU SAID ABOUT THE LAST ONE.

THERE ARE ZOMPIRES OUT THERE...

...ZOMPIRES THAT NEED STAKES IN THEIR CHESTS.

IF YOU WALK AWAY FROM THIS, CONSIDER YOURSELF FIRED.

ALL THE OTHER GIRLS SAID I SHOULDN'T HIRE YOU. THEY DIDN'T WANT TO WORK WITH THE PERSON WHO MADE SLAYERS OBSOLETE.

BUT I DID.

WHY? LAST TIME WE HAD THE BIG SEED TALK, THERE WAS LOTS OF BLAME GETTING TOSSED AROUND.

MOSTLY AT *ME.*

FOR THINGS LIKE WILLOW DUMPING YOU.

GETTING DUMPED BY WILLOW WAS THE BEST THING THAT COULD'VE HAPPENED TO ME.

IT FORCED ME TO REALIZE THAT MY OLD LIFE WAS OVER. SLAYING WASN'T GOING TO GIVE ME ANY KIND OF FUTURE.

BUT IT'S *NOT* OVER.

ZOMPIRES ARE ON A SIRING SPREE.

THE WORLD EMBRACED VAMPIRES WITH OPEN ARMS, BUFFY.

NOW IT'S GOT TO LEARN HOW TO DEAL WITH THEM WITHOUT CRYING FOR THE NEAREST SLAYER.

YOU'RE ONE OF THE STRONGEST GIRLS I KNOW. THE PEOPLE WHO HIRE US NEED OUR HELP--EVEN IF THEY'RE NOT GETTING CHASED BY SOME BIG BAD WITH AN UNPRONOUNCEABLE NAME.

I CAN'T JUST SHUT IT OFF LIKE YOU.

I THINK YOU'RE SCARED.

EXCUSE ME?

THAT'S WHY YOU FAILED THE TEST. THAT'S WHY YOU'VE CONVINCED YOURSELF THE WORLD CAN'T FUNCTION WITHOUT YOU.

YOU'RE SCARED OF BEING GOOD AT SOMETHING THAT DOESN'T INVOLVE SOME KIND OF GRAND *DESTINY.*

'CAUSE, FACE IT, BUFFY. SLAYING'S THE ONLY THING YOU'VE EVER KNOWN.

I'M NOT SCARED.

OKAY. MAYBE I'M A LITTLE BIT SCARED--

AAAAHHHHHHHHHH!

--BUT SO ARE OTHER PEOPLE.

AND NO MATTER WHAT KENNEDY SAYS, I CAN'T WALK AWAY FROM THEM.

GRRRRR!

SHE MIGHT BE MAD AT ME FOR DITCHING HER TRAINING MISSION.

SHE MIGHT FIRE ME.

BUT AT LEAST I GOT HERE IN TIME TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

PAFT

OR NOT.

NO PARKING

HOT

YOU OKAY?

GET HER TO SAINT FRANCIS.

THEN MEET ME BACK AT THE STATION TO FILE A REPORT.

DETECTIVE.

BUFFY SUMMERS IS CHASING *ME* DOWN FOR A CHANGE?

ONE OF YOUR COPS DUSTED A ZOMPIRE RIGHT OUT FROM UNDER ME.

THANKS TO YOU AND SPIKE, I THINK WE MIGHT BE ABLE TO GIVE YOU A RUN FOR YOUR MONEY.

XANDER TOLD ME WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR PARTNER.

I'M SORRY.

YEAH. IT HAPPENS.

BUT WHAT HAPPENED TO HER...

...IT'S WHAT GOT THE DEPARTMENT TO SUPPORT A TASK FORCE TO DEAL WITH THESE MONSTERS.

THAT'S WHY A PATROL OFFICER WAS ABLE TO SAVE THAT GIRL FROM BECOMING A WALKING BLOOD BANK.

17TH ST

HOT

YOU'RE ACTUALLY TRAINING COPS TO STAKE ZOMPIRES?

IT HASN'T BEEN EASY.

BUT ZOMPIRES ARE FERAL. PREDICTABLE. ONCE YOU FIGURE OUT THEIR PATTERNS, DUSTING THEM GETS A WHOLE LOT EASIER.

SO YOU DON'T NEED ME TO KEEP THE STREETS ZOMP-FREE?

I DON'T KNOW ABOUT THAT, BUFFY...

...BUT EVEN YOU'VE GOT TO HAVE A NIGHT OFF EVERY ONCE IN A WHILE.

WHAT IS "NIGHT OFF"?

THIS'D BE ONE HECK OF A PRICEY *TRAINING* MISSION.

TOLD YOU IT WAS REAL.

IF YOU WANT IN, YOU DON'T LEAVE MY SIDE.

AND YOU'RE CARRYING HIS LUGGAGE.

HIS NAME'S THEO DANIELS. FOUNDER OF A SOCIAL-NETWORKING SITE CALLED TINCAN.

IS THAT THE SITE WHERE YOU POKE PEOPLE?

YOU'RE NOT POKING ANYONE.

SO I HOPE YOU LEFT YOUR STAKES AT HOME.

YOU'RE BOTH SLAYERS, RIGHT?

YES. BUT WE'RE TRAINED TO HANDLE ANY SCENARIO--EVEN IF IT DOESN'T INVOLVE VAMPIRES OR DEMONS...

I HIRED YOU *BECAUSE* OF YOUR EXPERIENCE WITH DEMONS.

REALLY?

WHY?

AN ORGANIZATION FROM A HELL DIMENSION IS TRYING TO KILL ME. I THINK YOU'VE HEARD OF THEM BEFORE--

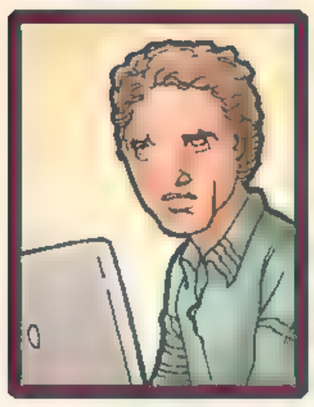
--WOLFRAM AND HART.

Tin Can

CONNECTED

INTERNET FOR THE SOUL

Tin Can



Theo Daniels

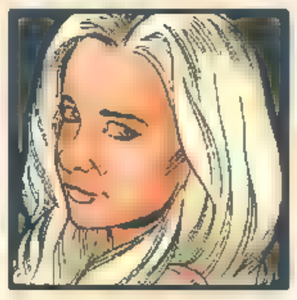
Occupation:
Founder, TinCan

Education:
Studied at NYU

Location:
Palo Alto, CA

Savit Mukherjee:
ANSWER YOUR PHONE.
WE'RE WORRIED.
2:15AM, Today

Dan Thomsen:
WHY'D YOU LEAVE
PRAGUE SO FAST?!
3:36PM, Wednesday



Lillian Parker:
HEY -- WANT TO
PARTY TONIGHT?
9:48PM, Tuesday

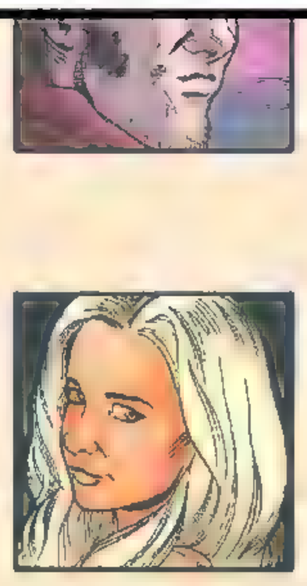
GUARDED

PART TWO

Occupation:
Founder, TinCan

Education:
Studied at NYU

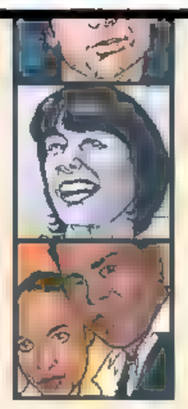
Location:
Palo Alto, CA

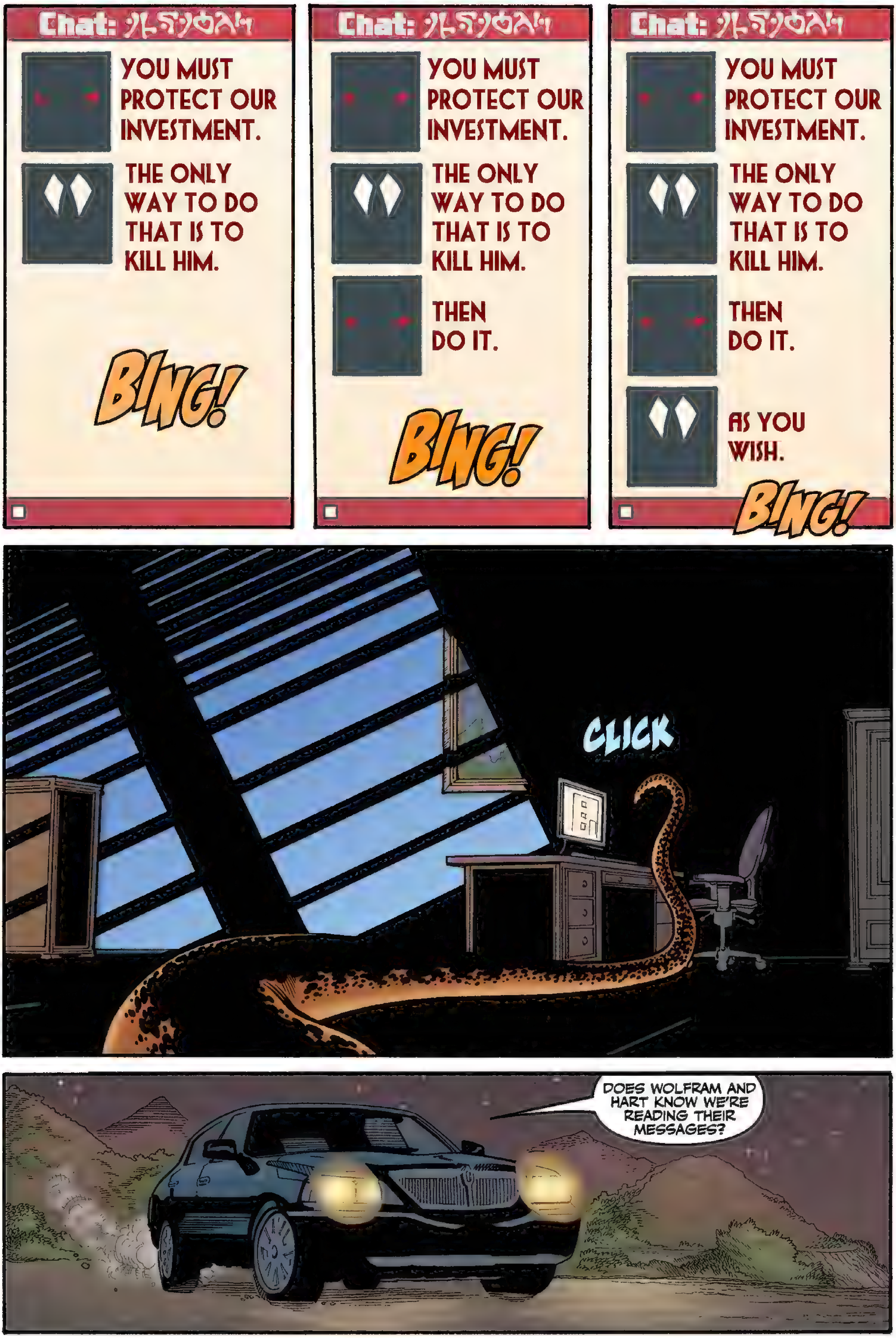


Chat: ﾊﾛｰﾜｰﾙﾄﾞ

YOU MUST
PROTECT OUR
INVESTMENT.

BING!




Chat:
YOU MUST PROTECT OUR INVESTMENT.
THE ONLY WAY TO DO THAT IS TO KILL HIM.
BING!
Chat:
YOU MUST PROTECT OUR INVESTMENT.
THE ONLY WAY TO DO THAT IS TO KILL HIM.
THEN DO IT.
BING!
Chat:
YOU MUST PROTECT OUR INVESTMENT.
THE ONLY WAY TO DO THAT IS TO KILL HIM.
THEN DO IT.
AS YOU WISH.
BING!
CLICK
DOES WOLFRAM AND HART KNOW WE'RE READING THEIR MESSAGES?

THEY'RE SUPPOSED TO BE PRIVATE.

...BUT WHEN DEMONS ARE USING YOUR WEBSITE TO ORDER HITS ON YOU...

...YOU USE YOUR SECURITY CLEARANCE TO BREAK THE RULES.

YOU SURE THIS IS REALLY WOLFRAM AND HART?

DEMON-LAW-FIRM-ANGEL-AND-SPIKE-WERE-PREPARED-TO-DIE-TO-KEEP-OUT-OF-THIS-REALM WOLFRAM AND HART?

LAST I HEARD, THE SENIOR PARTNERS WERE DIMENSION HOPPING RIGHT BEFORE OUR LITTLE *TWILIGHT* SHOWDOWN.

IF THEY WEREN'T HERE WHEN YOU BROKE THE SEED...

...SHOULDN'T THEY BE STUCK IN THEIR OWN HELL-SWEET-HELL?

SHE'S RIGHT.

WOLFRAM AND HART *CAN'T* BE THREATENING YOU. NOT IF THEY'RE IN ANOTHER DIMENSION.

YOU DON'T KNOW?

TINCAN WORKS FROM THE HELL DIMENSIONS.

SOCIAL NETWORKING FOR DEMONS?

FREDO

TARAMIND

THE DESTROYER

GOLTH

HOW DOES IT WORK?

THERE ISN'T SUPPOSED TO BE ANY MAGICAL MOJO LEFT IN THIS WORLD.

IT'S NOT MAGIC.

IT'S DEMON TECH.

A FEW YEARS AGO, WOLFRAM AND HART GAVE ME STARTUP MONEY IN EXCHANGE FOR EMBEDDING CODE IN THE SOFTWARE.

I THOUGHT THEY WERE LOOKING FOR A WAY TO TRACK ADVERTISING.

INSTEAD THEY CREATED A DIGITAL PORTAL TO THEIR HOME DIMENSION.

BEFORE I DESTROYED THE SEED.

WHEN EVERY OTHER PORTAL TO THE HELL DIMENSIONS WENT KAPUT, YOUR WEBSITE STAYED CONNECTED?

THANKS TO CODE I DON'T FULLY UNDERSTAND.

BUT I'M PRETTY SURE THAT IF TINCAN'S CONNECTION GOES DOWN *NOW,* THERE'S NO WAY TO RECONNECT.

THEN DELETE THE CODE FROM TINCAN.

I ALREADY TRIED.

THE COMPANY IS ABOUT TO GO PUBLIC NEXT MONTH, AND I WANTED TO PULL THE CODE BEFORE ANYONE DISCOVERED IT.

BUT WOLFRAM AND HART EMBEDDED IT TOO DEEPLY.

SO HOW DO WE SEVER THE CONNECTION?

THERE'S ONE WAY TO DO IT.

BUT IT'S NOT GOING TO BE EASY.

WHAT?

DESTROY THE SERVERS. *ERASE* TINCAN'S EXISTENCE.

WE'VE DONE A LOT HARDER.

BUFFY, YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND...

WE'RE NOT TURNING OFF A WEBSITE.

WE'RE WIPING OUT DATA THAT BELONGS TO MILLIONS OF USERS, WE'RE STEALING BILLIONS IN ADVERTISING, AND WE'RE PISSING OFF A LOT OF PEOPLE WHO *THOUGHT* THEY WERE ABOUT TO BECOME VERY RICH.

AND TINCAN IS MY LIFE.

WON'T BE FOR LONG EITHER WAY.

IF YOU *DON'T* CUT THEM OFF, WOLFRAM AND HART WON'T STOP UNTIL YOU'RE DEAD.

AND SOMEHOW I DOUBT YOU'RE THE ONLY PERSON ON THEIR HIT LIST.

I KNOW.

IT'S THE ONLY WAY OUT OF THIS. AND IT'S WHY I HIRED YOU.

CORPORATE TERRORISM?

DEEPSCAN CAN'T BE A PART OF THIS.

BUT OUR MISSION IS TO PROTECT THEO AT ALL COSTS--

OKAY. RIGHT.

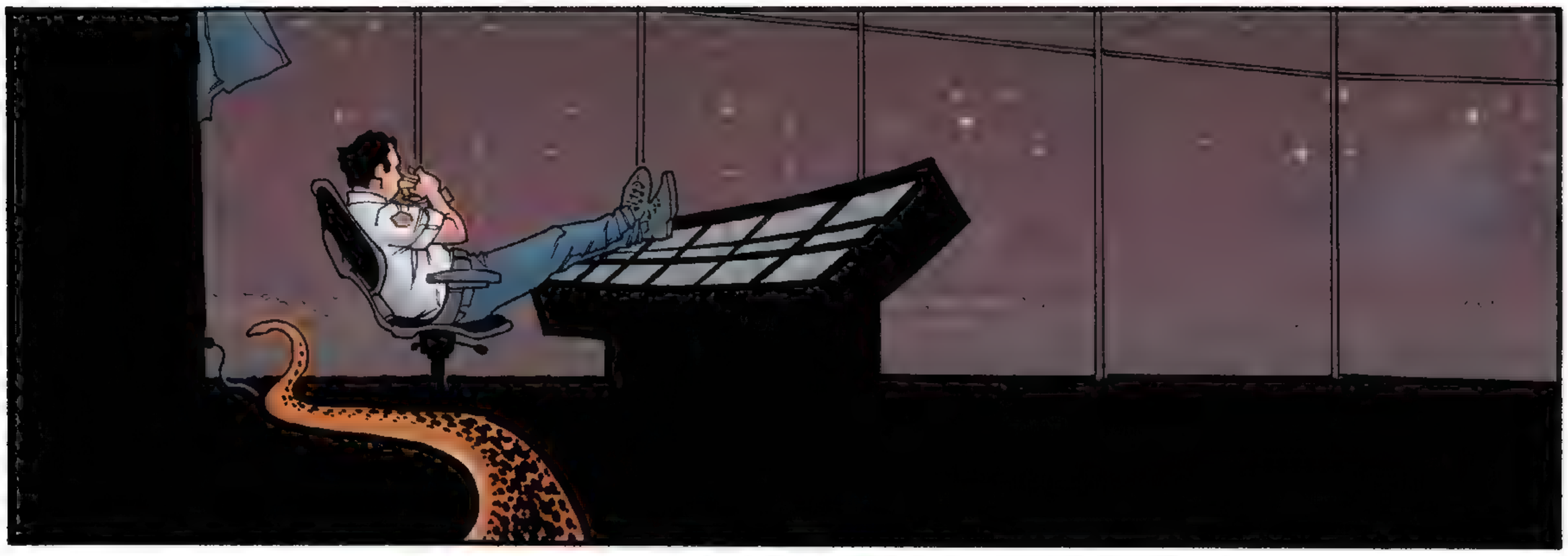
BUT DEEPSCAN CAN'T BE A PART OF THIS ***ON THE BOOKS.*** WE RUN THIS UNDER THE RADAR. EVERYTHING GOES THROUGH ME.

SO TELL ME, THEO...

...WHERE ARE THE SERVERS WE HAVE TO FRY?

"UNDERNEATH TINCAN HEADQUARTERS."

INTERNET FOR THE SOUL



CLICK

#$¢%!

AAAHHH!

A TEUTH DEMON IS IN THE HOUSE.

A TEUTH DEMON?

AREN'T THEY REALLY, REALLY BIG?

NO ONE'S EVER SEEN AN ENTIRE SPECIMEN.

WE'RE GOING TO NEED BACKUP.

I'LL CALL IN SOME GIRLS FROM DEEPSCAN.

A BUNCH OF EX-SLAYERS WHO'VE HAD EVERY SLAYER INSTINCT DRILLED OUT OF THEM?

WE'LL NEVER GET INSIDE.

WHO DO *YOU* WANT TO CALL?

AND DON'T SAY BLONDIE.

SPIKE'S BOLDLY GOING WHERE NO VAMPIRE HAS GONE BEFORE.

I WAS THINKING SINCE WE'RE FACING A DEMON THREAT...

"...MAYBE WE NEED A DEMON WHO'S ON OUR SIDE."

SLAYER.

I HEARD YOU'D SHACKED UP HERE, BUT I HAD NO IDEA YOU'D MADE IT SO WARM AND...

...SERIAL KILLER-Y.

YOU FOUND ME CONTEMPLATING THE FEW FACTS I KNOW ABOUT THE *BEAST* WHO WRONGLY IMPRISONED ME.

WE'RE IN THE SAME BOAT.

THE *S.S. I-COULD-REALLY-USE-YOUR-HELP.*

YOU EVER HEAR OF WOLFRAM AND HART?

BACK IN MY TIME, THE WOLF, THE RAM, AND THE HART WERE CONSIDERED NOTHING MORE THAN...

...CHATTEL.

WELL, YOUR CHATTEL IS GOING TO KILL SOMEONE I'M TRYING TO PROTECT. UNLESS WE INTERVENE.

WHEN I SOUGHT HELP, YOU TURNED ME AWAY.

WHY SHOULD I NOT DO THE SAME?

BECAUSE A COMPUTER GEEK'S LIFE IS AT STAKE.

AND I SUSPECTED THE MORAL APPEAL MIGHT NOT WORK.

IF YOU EXPLAINED THE NITOBE CODE TO ME CORRECTLY, YOU'RE INDEBTED TO ME.

I'M CALLING IN THAT DEBT.

WHERE MUST WE GO?

I HAVE NOT FACED A TEUTH DEMON IN THOUSANDS OF YEARS.

THIS WILL NOT BE EASY.

HE'S KIND OF CUTE.

IF YOU'RE INTO THAT SORT OF THING.

DEMONS?

GUYS.

BUFFY, YOU SURE WE SHOULD LET THEO DO THIS?

UNLESS *YOU* KNOW HOW TO MAKE THE TECH GO KABLOOEY...

HE'S GOT TO COME WITH US.

NO. I MEAN SHOULD WE LET HIM DESTROY TINCAN?

SINCE YOU DESTROYED THE SEED, THIS IS THE FIRST CONNECTION WE'VE FOUND TO ANOTHER WORLD.

A VERY BAD WORLD. WITH VERY BAD DEMONS IN IT.

BUT THIS ISN'T ABOUT THE SENIOR PARTNERS, IS IT?

IF WE TALK THEO OUT OF DESTROYING TINCAN...

...MAYBE WILLOW COULD USE IT TO GET HER MAGIC BACK.

WILLOW GETTING MAGIC BACK ISN'T GOING TO UNDO WHAT HAPPENED BETWEEN YOU TWO.

AND YOU TOLD ME THE BREAKUP WAS A GOOD THING.

DOESN'T MEAN I DON'T CARE ABOUT HER ANYMORE.

AND, BUFFY...

IT MIGHT ALSO GET PEOPLE OFF YOUR ASS FOR A CHANGE.

THE TEUTH STRIKES ON MANY FRONTS.

SO MUST WE.

KOH, YOU'RE WITH ME ON TEAM DISTRACTION.

BUFFY AND THEO, YOU'RE ON TEAM SERVER ROOM.

WE MOVE FAST AND WE STAY IN TOUCH.

UNDERSTOOD?

YEAH.

YES, MA'AM.

I WILL DO WHATEVER THE SLAYER ASKS OF ME.

WHICH MEANS YOU WILL DO WHATEVER *THAT* SLAYER ASKS OF YOU.

A TRUE WARRIOR KEEPS HIS HEAD CLEAR DURING BATTLE.

A TRUE WARRIOR KNOWS WHEN TO PICK HIS BATTLES.

NEED A WEAPON?

I BROUGHT MY OWN.

THE GREEN CABLES LEAD STRAIGHT TO THE SERVERS.

KENNEDY, STATUS UPDATE?

WAY AHEAD OF SCHEDULE!

BANG

AHHHH!

BUFFY, HE'S GOT A VISUAL ON YOU!

WE KNOW.

!

THEO--

LITTLE *HELP* DOWN HERE!

WE MUST FIND THE ROOT OF THE DEMON.

IT'S GOTTA LEAD HOME.

YOU CANNOT WIN.

THE TEUTH?

TEUTH CAN'T SPEAK.

IT MUST BE--

--WOLFRAM AND HART?!

WE ROLLED OUT *VIDEO* CHAT LAST MONTH!

THEY MUST HAVE CONNECTED IT TO THE SECURITY SYSTEM!

SO THEY CAN HEAR US IN THE HELL DIMENSION?

DO WE CUT ONE OF THESE...?

WE CUT THEM ALL.

YOU CANNOT WIN.

BUFFY, CAN YOU TELL US--

BANG BANG

--WHICH TENTACLE HAS *YOU?!*

BANG

I DUNNO. IT LOOKS LIKE--

--A *TENTACLE!*

...TOO MANY...

SWISH

YOU WILL NOT DESTROY OUR FOOTHOLD.

CLICK

TOO LATE.

YOU OKAY?

YEAH. LET'S END THIS.

NO MATTER WHAT YOU DO-- --WE WILL FIND A WAY TO STOP YOU!

WHO'S GOING TO CLEAN THIS UP?

SECOND THOUGHTS?

AND THIRD AND FOURTH.

IF I SHUT THE COOLING SYSTEM DOWN, THE SERVERS WILL CATCH FIRE...

WOPD

...THE THING I SPENT MY ENTIRE LIFE BUILDING WILL BE GONE.

BUT IT'S NOT ABOUT THE MONEY.

I DON'T CARE IF I LIVE IN A GIANT HOUSE, FLY ON PRIVATE JETS, OR CAN AFFORD SLAYER BODYGUARDS.

THOUGH AT THE MOMENT THAT'S COMING IN HANDY.

I CREATED TINCAN TO CONNECT PEOPLE.

TO CHANGE THE WORLD.

TRUST ME. I KNOW THE INSTINCT.

NO ONE'S GOING TO UNDERSTAND WHY I DESTROYED WHAT I WORKED SO HARD TO BUILD.

YOU'RE RIGHT. THEY WON'T.

YOU'RE GOING TO GET BLAMED FOR BEING SELFISH. FOR DOING THIS TO SAVE YOUR LIFE. TO FIX THE MISTAKES YOU MADE.

YOU'RE GOING TO LOSE FRIENDS.

BUT AT THE END OF THE DAY, YOU'RE DOING IT FOR THE RIGHT REASONS.

TO KEEP WOLFRAM AND HART AND THEIR BRAND OF EVIL OUT OF OUR WORLD.

SORRY, THEO, YOU'VE GOT TO DESTROY TINCAN.

I KNOW.

NOT SO FAST.

WOLF, RAM, AND HART, I KNOW YOU CAN HEAR ME.

WOPR

IF YOU IDENTIFY THE DEMON RESPONSIBLE FOR MY IMPRISONMENT...

...I WILL KILL THE BOY.

YOUR CONNECTION TO THIS WORLD WILL BE SAVED.

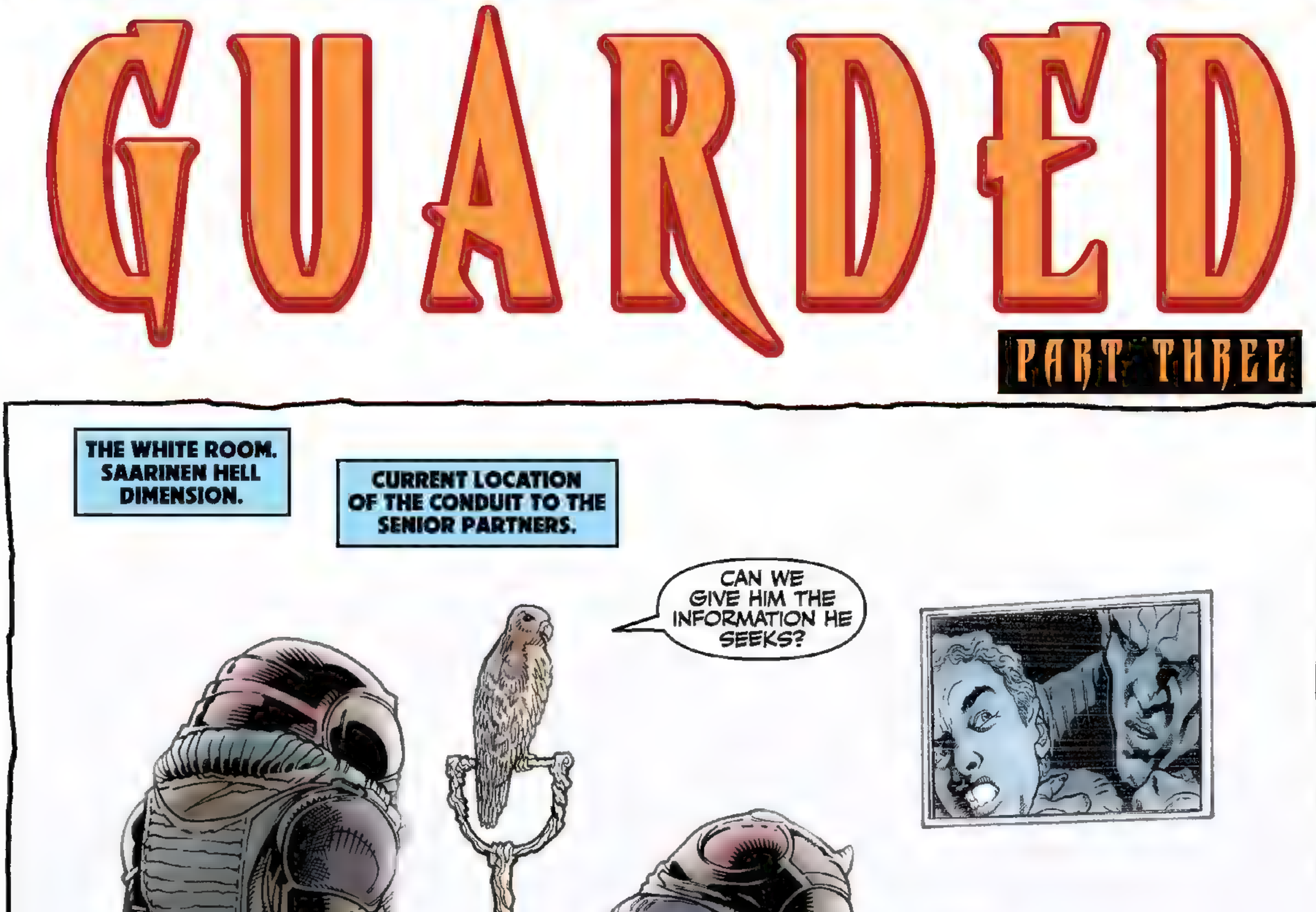
BUT THE NITOBE CODE--

YOU MISTAKE THE CODE. HONOR RANKS ABOVE ALL ELSE. AND I CANNOT HAVE HONOR WITHOUT VENGEANCE.

GET ME WHAT I WANT. AND I'LL KILL HIM FOR YOU.

GUARDED

PART THREE



ELDRE KOH WAS IMPRISONED MILLENNIA AGO...

...SO IT WILL TAKE TIME TO FIND OUT WHO PUT HIM THERE.

THEN HURRY. TINCAN MUST BE PROTECTED.

VERY WELL, ELDRE KOH, WE WILL FIND THE INFORMATION YOU SEEK.

THEN YOU MUST KILL HIM.

AND EVERYONE ELSE WHO KNOWS OUR VULNERABILITY.

YOU'RE NOT KILLING *ANYONE.*

WE CAN FIGURE OUT WHO BETRAYED YOU *WITHOUT* TRUSTING THE BIGGEST BADS AROUND.

NOT IF THE BOY SEVERS OUR ONLY LINK TO THE HELL DIMENSIONS.

YOU SAY THAT LIKE IT'S A BAD THING.

LEAVE, SLAYER, OR HE DIES NOW.

I WILL DEAL WITH YOU LATER.

LISTEN TO HIM, BUFFY.

NO WAY.

YOU HIRED ME TO PROTECT YOU.

AND NOW I'M ASKING YOU TO PROTECT EVERYONE ELSE.

IF I DIE, SOMEONE HAS TO DESTROY TINCAN. AND YOU'RE NOT GOING TO DO IT WITH A PIPE.

FINE...

...BUT I'LL BE BACK BEFORE THE SENIOR PARTNERS GIVE KOH A REASON TO KILL YOU.

YOU CAN RETURN, BUT YOU WILL NOT SUCCEED.

KENNEDY...

LAST THING I KNEW YOUR DEMON BESTIE AND I HAD JUST MADE CALAMARI OUT OF THE TEUTH.

YEAH, WELL, KOH JUST GOT DOWNGRADED TO WORSTIE.

HE'S THE ONE WHO KNOCKED YOU OUT.

SO THE DEMON *YOU* TALKED ME INTO BRINGING ONTO THE MISSION BETRAYED US?

HE HAD A CODE OF HONOR.

WHICH APPARENTLY HAS LOTS OF FINE PRINT I *DIDN'T* KNOW ABOUT.

THERE'S MORE...

...HE'S HOLDING THEO HOSTAGE.

AND YOU *LEFT* HIM?

THEO WANTED ME TO.

SO YOU AND I COULD REGROUP TO MAKE SURE TINCAN GETS DESTROYED NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS TO HIM.

SOMETIMES YOU GET SO CAUGHT UP SAVING THE WORLD YOU FORGET THE LITTLE GUY.

AFTER WHAT HAPPENED WITH THE SEED, I THOUGHT YOU WOULD HAVE LEARNED THAT.

AND *I* THOUGHT WE ALREADY HAD THE WILLOW CONVERSATION.

I'M NOT TALKING ABOUT WILLOW.

THEN *WHO* ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?

GILES.

WHAK

I'M NOT GOING TO LET ANYONE DIE.

WE'RE GOING TO SHUT DOWN THIS DEMON TELEGRAPH *AND* SAVE THEO.

WE SAVE THEO...

...WHAT *YOU* DO AFTER THAT...

...THAT'S UP TO YOU.

WOLFRAM AND HART HAS THIS PLACE WIRED LIKE A CHRISTMAS TREE.

KOH WILL KNOW WE'RE COMING--

--UNLESS WE GO WHERE HE CAN'T SEE US.

THE SLAYERS ARE MOVING UNDERGROUND.

CAN THEY GET IN FROM BENEATH THIS ROOM?

WE'RE SURROUNDED BY TEN FEET OF CONCRETE IN EVERY DIRECTION.

TINCAN BUILT THE MOST SECURE SERVER FARM NEXT TO THE N.S.A.

THAT WAS *MY* IDEA.

WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU? WHY WERE YOU IMPRISONED?

IT MUST HAVE BEEN PRETTY BAD IF YOU'RE WILLING TO KILL SOMEONE YOU DON'T EVEN KNOW.

DO NOT TRY TO GET CLOSE TO ME.

WAM

I KNOW YOUR KIND'S TRICKS. YOU WILL ATTEMPT TO TALK ME OUT OF WHAT I MUST DO.

IF YOU'RE GOING TO KILL ME, I THINK I GET TO ASK *WHY.*

AND YOU THINK I CARE ABOUT YOUR WISHES?

NO ONE NEEDS TO KNOW WHY I WAS IMPRISONED.

WE SHOULD BE JUST BENEATH THE SERVER ROOM.

THESE THINGS ARE STICKIER THAN I THOUGHT.

JUST BE GLAD YOU DIDN'T GET DRAGGED ANYWHERE NEAR THIS THING'S MOUTH.

WHEN THIS IS OVER, I'M GOING TO GET FIRED, AREN'T I?

DEPENDS ON WHETHER OR NOT THEO'S BRAINS ARE INSIDE OR OUTSIDE HIS HEAD.

REINFORCED CONCRETE.

HOW ARE WE GOING TO BLAST THROUGH THAT?

WE DON'T HAVE TO.

WE KNOW WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR ELDRE KOH'S IMPRISONMENT.

SOMEONE WHOSE BETRAYAL SHOULD NOT SURPRISE US. AND THE PERPETRATOR IS STILL ON *EARTH.*

ELDRE KOH, WE HAVE THE INFORMATION YOU WANT.

SHOW ME.

NOT UNTIL YOU KILL THEO DANIELS.

AFTER I GET THE NAME.

IF YOU DON'T TELL ME, I WILL DESTROY THE SERVERS MYSELF.

VERY WELL. IT HAS BEEN SENT.

CAN'T LET YOU DO IT, KOH.

Receiving Message

LEAVE US.

OR I WILL BLACKEN YOUR OTHER EYE.

THIS? YOU DIDN'T DO THIS.

TRACK

I DID.

HOW MANY TIMES DO I HAVE TO *TELL* YOU?

WE'RE *NOT* KILLING THE COMPUTER GEEK.

YOU OKAY?

YEAH.

LET'S GET OUT OF HERE.

NOT UNTIL WE DESTROY THE SERVERS.

KOH-- KILL THEM!

SOMEONE WANT TO SHUT HIM UP?

WORKING ON IT!

I CAN'T PROTECT YOU DOWN HERE.

YOU CAN EITHER TRY...

...OR YOU CAN DO THE WHOLE DRAG-ME-OUT-OF-HERE-KICKING-AND-SCREAMING THING.

YOU'VE GOT TWO MINUTES.

WISH I KNEW THAT TRICK.

CLICK

CAN I GET AN E.T.A. ON THE KA-BOOM?

IT'S GOING TO TAKE TIME FOR THE SERVERS TO OVERHEAT.

YOU WILL NOT STAND IN MY WAY, SLAYER.

I WOULD HAVE *HELPED* YOU...

...FIND WHO YOU'RE LOOKING FOR.

WHIP

...KENNEDY...

UNH!

SLICE

WE CAN'T STAY DOWN HERE.

WE HAVE TO. IT CAN STILL BE REVERSED.

KRRF

--WE CAN'T LET HIM GET CLOSE--

KRFFF

SCREW WOLFRAM AND HART.

MY JOB IS TO PROTECT *YOU.*

KRFFF

LET'S SEE 'EM FIX *THAT.*

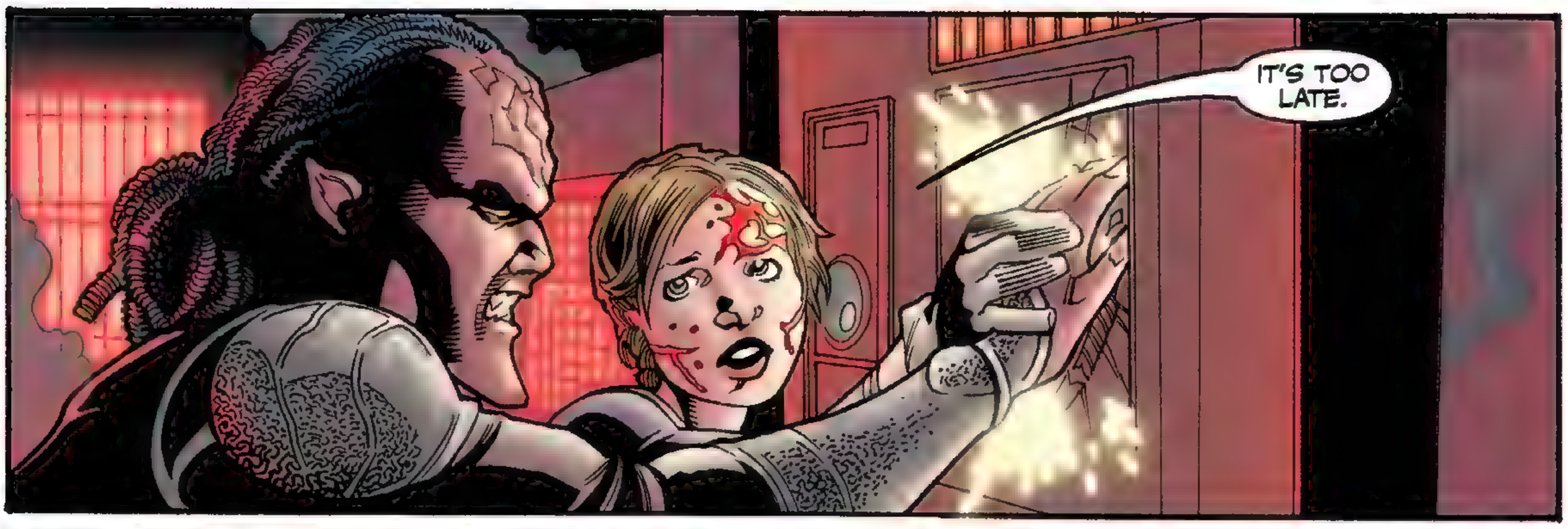
BUFFY!

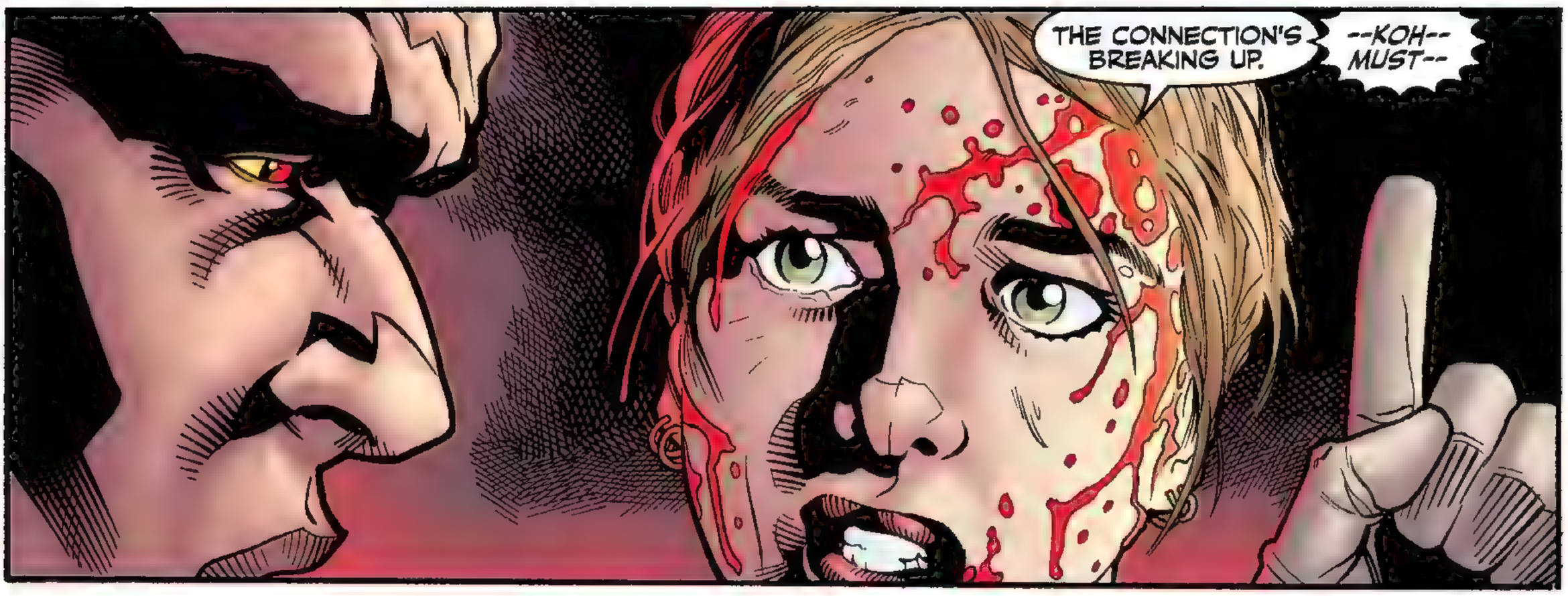
WE'RE GETTING OUT OF HERE!

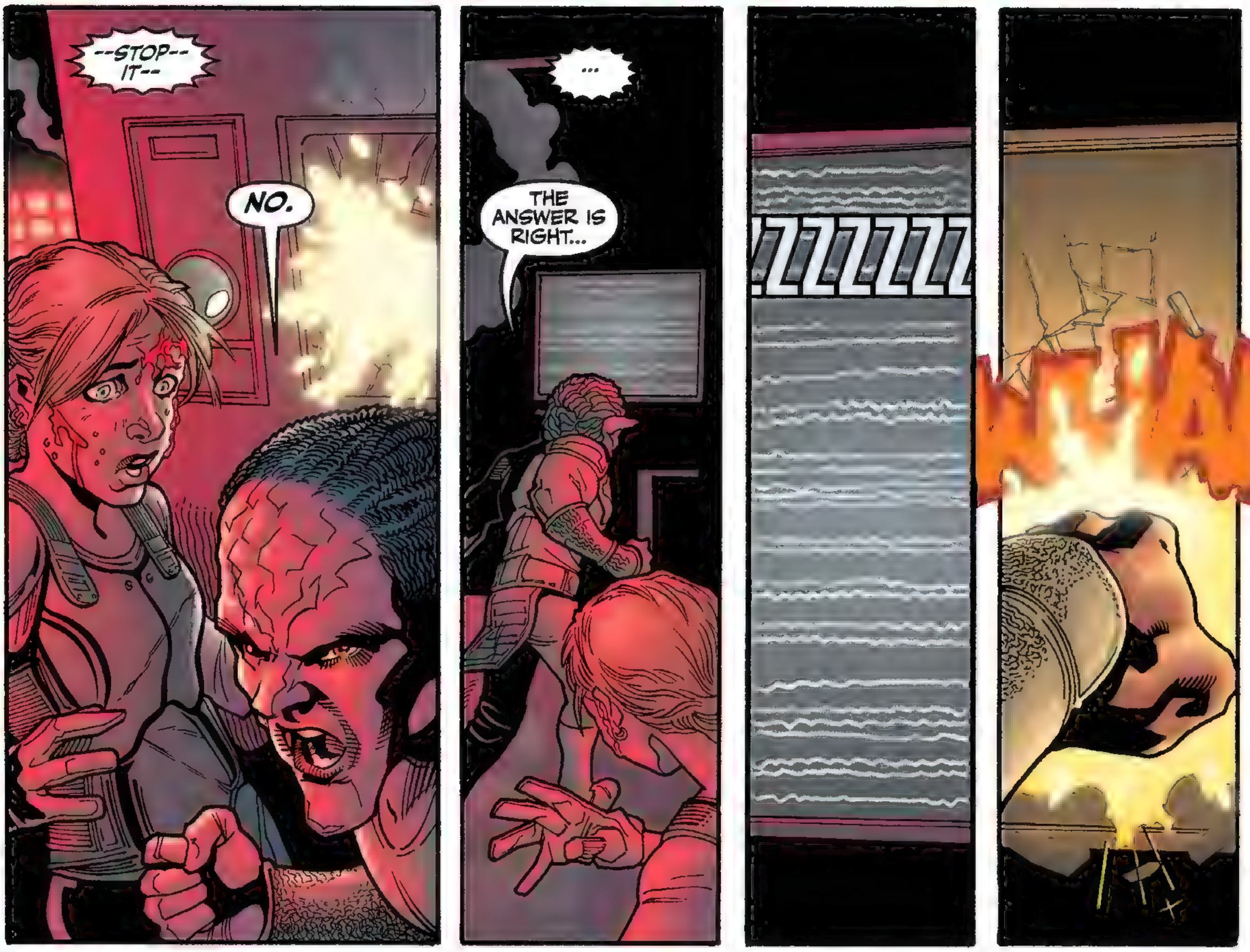
GO WITHOUT ME.

I DIDN'T MESS UP BY BRINGING *TRAITOR KOH* ON BOARD ONLY TO LET WOLFRAM AND HART WIN.

GIVE IT UP.


IT'S TOO LATE.


THE CONNECTION'S BREAKING UP.
--KOH-- MUST--


--STOP-- IT--
NO.
...
THE ANSWER IS RIGHT...
ZZZZZZZ
WHAM

WHATEVER IT IS THAT SENT YOU STRAIGHT TO DEMON JAIL WITHOUT PASSING GO...

...HAPPENED A REALLY LONG TIME AGO.

YOUR POINT?

LET IT GO.

EASY FOR YOU, SLAYER.

NOTHING'S WORTH ALL THIS. NOT FOR SOME ANCIENT CODE OF HONOR.

IT'S MORE THAN HONOR--

WHAT...?

...IT'S SOMETHING YOU WILL NEVER UNDERSTAND, SLAYER.

SORRY, THEO.

WHY?

URL www.TinCan.com
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"THE HELL DIMENSIONS ARE OFFICIALLY OFFLINE..."

...SO WHY DO I FEEL LIKE I'M ABOUT TO GET IN TROUBLE?

YOU ALMOST GOT OUR CLIENT'S HEAD CHOPPED OPEN BY A GUY WITH MAGIC PIZZA CUTTERS FOR HANDS.

IT'S BAD, ISN'T IT?

I KNOW I'M NOT CUT OUT FOR GUARDING ANYONE.

SO I'LL SAVE YOU THE TROUBLE OF SAYING THE F-WORD.

BUFFY, I DIDN'T CALL YOU IN HERE TO FIRE YOU.

THERE'S SOMETHING WORSE THAN FIRING?

I LET DEEPSCAN IN ON WHAT HAPPENED. AND WE WANT TO PROMOTE YOU TO SENIOR OPERATIVE.

THEO MAY BE BROKE NOW, BUT HE'S GOT A LOT OF FRIENDS WHO AREN'T. AND HE TOLD ALL OF THEM WHAT YOU DID.

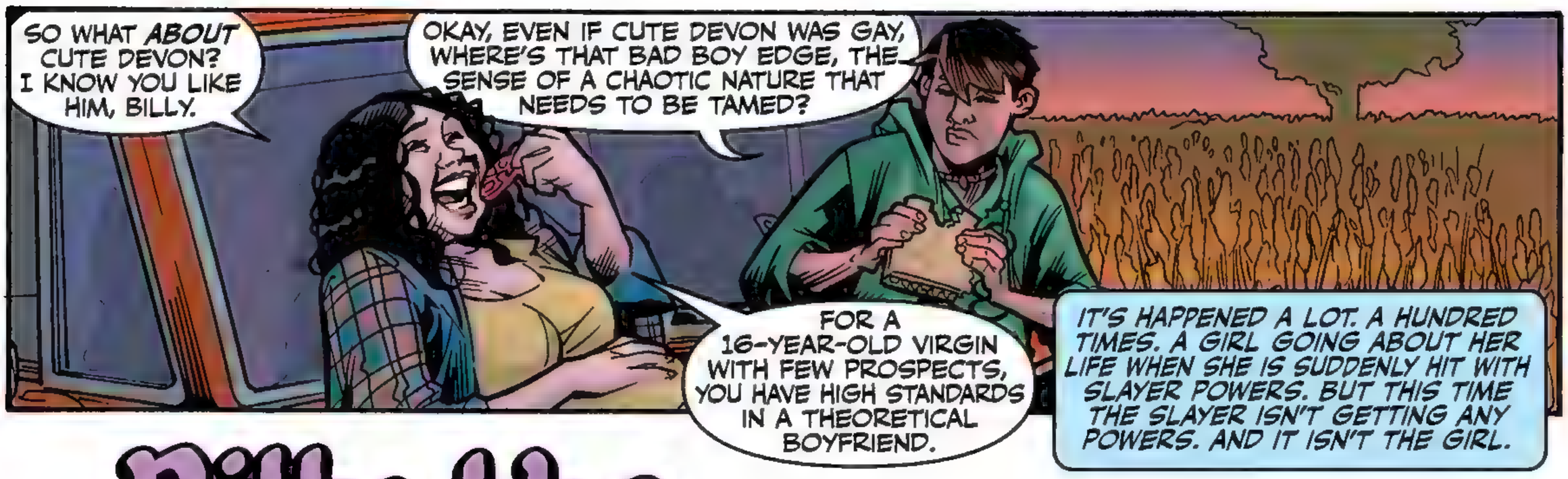
AND NOW EVERY SILICON VALLEY C.E.O. AND VENTURE CAPITALIST WITH A DOT-COM WANTS TO HIRE YOU TO PROTECT THEM.

THAT'S FOR THE TINCAN JOB.
THIS MUCH MONEY FITS IN ONE CHECK?
IF YOU TAKE THE JOB, YOU'LL BE MAKING THAT MUCH EVERY WEEK.
I CAN'T DO IT.
IS IT BECAUSE OF WHAT I SAID ABOUT GILES?
'CAUSE I WAS OUT OF LINE. YOU MADE A TOUGH CALL, AND WE NEED SOMEONE WHO CAN MAKE DECISIONS LIKE THAT.
BUT YOU WERE RIGHT. I KEEP TRYING TO SAVE THE WORLD WHEN SOMETIMES I SHOULD JUST SAVE A SINGLE PERSON.
IT WAS DIFFERENT WHEN I WAS YOUNGER. SOMETHING CHANGED.
BUT I DON'T THINK THAT'S A BAD THING.
AND IF I TOOK THIS JOB, I'D BE DOING IT FOR JUST ONE PERSON.
ME.
AFTER ALL YOU'VE BEEN THROUGH, DON'T YOU THINK YOU DESERVE THAT? TO FINALLY HAVE THE KIND OF LIFE YOU WANT.
MAYBE. BUT THAT'S JUST NOT WHO I AM.
I'M THE SLAYER.

JOIN THE FIGHT

ACA the CREATURES of the NIGHT!

A GIRL. A BOY. A SUMMER NIGHT.
JAKE? DAVID? CUTE DEVON? IT'S CUTE DEVON, ISN'T IT?
YOU HAVE NO BOUNDARIES, KATIE. I'M GOING TO BUY YOU SOME BOUNDARIES.
rrrrrrrrrrrrrrrm
YOU HEAR THAT?
IT'S COMING.
rrrrrRRRRRRRUUU
UUUOOOOOOOOOOOHHH
I WONDER WHERE IT WAS COMING FROM.
SOMEWHERE NICER THAN THIS.
OOOH. I CAN ACTUALLY SEE THE BITTER FLYING OFF YOU IN LITTLE DROPS.
SORRY, I'M JUST WHATEVER TODAY. YOU KNOW.
BOY TROUBLES?
I DON'T HAVE A BOY.
...AND THAT'S THE TROUBLE.
HHHHHHHHmmmmm



Billy the Vampire Slayer

PART ONE

rrrrrrrrrr

SOMEONE DIED.

SOMEWHERE.

AND THE BODY FOUND ITS WAY HOME, THE WAY BODIES ARE SUPPOSED TO...

KRAK

INSIDE, THE BEAST WAITS.

GUYS? WE MIGHT HAVE A LOOSE ANIMAL UP IN HERE.

GUYS?

THANKS FOR THE RIDE, KATIE!

OH, LOOK AT THE PRETTY GIRL. BE CAREFUL OUT HERE, PRETTY GIRL.

DON'T BE SILLY, GARRON. THAT'S BILLY LANE. HE LIVES HERE WITH HIS SWEET OLD HIPPIE GRANNY.

THAT'S RIGHT. SHE SUPPORTS HIM AND HIS DIFFERENCES.

LET ME...

HE HAS TO LIVE HERE BECAUSE HIS PARENTS KICKED HIM OUT.

IT'S SO TRAGIC...

...WHAT HAPPENS TO GAY TEENS WHEN THEIR PARENTS REJECT THEM.

UNSURE OF WHO OR WHAT THEY ARE, REJECTED BY MAN AND GOD...

COME ON, GUYS--

LOTS OF THEM END UP ON THE STREET.

LOTS OF TIMES...THEY KILL THEMSELVES.

LET ME GO!

I DON'T THINK HE LIKES US.

DAMN FAIRY.

BILLY? IS THAT YOU?

WHEN YOU FIND THE FAMILY YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO HAVE, YOU KNOW BECAUSE THEY KNOW WHEN NOT TO SAY ANYTHING.

START WITH FOUR ZOMPIRES. TWO STAGGER TOWARD THEIR HOMES. ANOTHER HEADS INTO THE AIRPORT. THE FOURTH STAYS WHERE SHE IS. BETWEEN THEM, IN ONE NIGHT, THEY MEET SIX MEN, FIVE WOMEN, AND FIVE CHILDREN.

SOME OF THESE TWENTY NEW ZOMPIRES MEET NO ONE. BUT ONE OF THEM MEETS FIFTEEN PEOPLE IN A SINGLE HOUR. BETWEEN THEM, THEY CREATE FORTY-FIVE NEW ZOMPIRES. AND THEY SPREAD OUT.

BY MORNING, THEY ARE MANY.

THAT'S A BLUEBERRY WHEAT GERM BREAKFAST SMOOTHIE. I KNEW YOU'D LIKE IT.

YOU HATE IT.

WOW, SKY. I LOVE IT. SO MUCH TEXTURE.

IT'S A LITTLE... SANDY.

Calculus II

HERE'S A FIVE. BUY A POP-TART. GET A WHOLE-WHEAT ONE AND MAKE AN OLD LADY HAPPY.

THANKS.

ARE YOU REALLY OKAY?

I'M FINE.

HOME-SCHOOLING IS STILL AN OPTION.

I CAN HANDLE IT.

I DON'T BELIEVE IN VIOLENCE.

I KNOW. DON'T WORRY.

I REALLY AM OKAY.

WHAT'S THE RIGHT WAY TO FIGHT BACK?

YOU TRY TO BE STRONG, TO MAKE YOURSELF STRONG. YOU'D DO IT SOME CLEVER WAY INSTEAD, BUT THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS MAGIC, AND THINGS JUST SEEM TO BE STACKED AGAINST YOU.

ARE YOU SAFEST WHEN YOU'RE WITH OTHER PEOPLE? OR WHEN YOU'RE ALONE?

AND WHAT ABOUT WHEN YOU THINK YOU'RE ALONE...

...BUT SOMEONE IS WATCHING?

OH!

FWUMP

IT'S YOU.

DEVON. UM... HEY. NICE TO-- HEY.

I DIDN'T KNOW YOU WERE A FIGHTER.

I'M NOT. I MEAN, I JUST... I DO THE TRAINING PART, NOT THE FIGHTING PART. YOU KNOW WHAT THEY SAY, "I'M A LOVER, NOT"--NEVER MIND. THEY DON'T SAY THAT.

I'M STILL NEW. AT THIS POINT THERE'S A LOT OF JUMP ROPING. IT MIGHT NOT HELP.

WHY DON'T YOU LET PEOPLE KNOW YOU DO THIS? THEY MIGHT LEAVE YOU ALONE.

YOU MAKE A GOOD POINT.

SO, UM...WHY WERE YOU HERE? SO EARLY. IN THE GYM.

JUST LOOKING AROUND.

YEAH? SORRY I'M NOT MORE PICTURESQUE, THEN.

YOU THINK SO?

LE SIGH.

CUBESMASHER VIDEO

ZOMPIRES DON'T CARE ABOUT NIGHT AND DAY, AS LONG AS THEY CAN FIND DARKNESS. ALL AROUND THE CLOCK, THEY CAN HUNT AND EAT AND MULTIPLY LIKE ROACHES. IF YOU HAVE ONE, CHECK YOUR ABANDONED STOREFRONTS.

YOU HAVE HUNDREDS.

I'M ALMOST HOME. DON'T SWEAT IT, KATIE. BESIDES, POST AND GARRON WEREN'T EVEN IN SCHOOL TODAY.

I DON'T KNOW. I HEARD THE MALL DIDN'T EVEN OPEN TODAY BECAUSE SO MANY PEOPLE WERE OUT...

HA! I KNOW. THOSE IDIOTS PROBABLY ATE THEM.

OH, AND SPEAKING OF SOMETHING WE WEREN'T TALKING ABOUT, I HAD A LOVELY ENCOUNTER WITH YOU-KNOW-CUTE THIS MORNING.

3000

YES! CUTE DEVON! I'M SERIOUS. IT WAS AMAZING. VERY HANKS AND RYAN. WHAT? NO. I SAID HANKS--

OH, BILLY, WHEN YOU TALK ON YOUR PHONE, YOU GET DISTRACTED AND YOU DON'T NOTICE WHO MIGHT BE AROUND YOU.

YOU SHOULD BE PAYING ATTENTION. THE SUN IS ALMOST DOWN AND THERE ARE RUMORS ABOUT VAMPIRES IN TOWN.

JUST GO AWAY, GARRON. IT'S NOT DARK, ANYWAY.

IT'S ALMOST DARK. AND HERE'S YOUR PHONE. IT'S NICE. I JUST WANTED TO TAKE A CLOSER LOOK.

OH, CAN'T YOU GET PAST ME? I'M SO SORRY! I'M RIDICULOUSLY CLUMSY.

NO. NO MORE. I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING, BUT I'M NOT INTERESTED IN PLAYING THIS GAME ANYMORE.

BILLY! I'M SHOCKED. WHAT HAVE I DONE TO MAKE YOU NOT LIKE ME?

GARRON?

POST?

THANK YOU FOR EVERYTHING, SKY. IT WAS GOOD.

SOMETIMES IT DOESN'T COME IN A FLASH OF MAGICKS. BUT IT STILL COMES IN A FLASH.

SWOOP

CUTE DEV-- DEVON!

HI.

DID YOU SEE THAT? DID YOU ACTUALLY SEE THAT?

I WAS ACTUALLY RIGHT HERE, YES. I DON'T THINK HE'S GETTING UP SOON.

RIGHT. THANK YOU. THAT WAS AMAZING.

THAT'S MY ROOM. DO YOU WANT TO COME IN?

WHAT THE HELL WAS THAT THING?

ZOMPIRE. HAVEN'T YOU HEARD OF THEM?

NO. BUT THE NAME IS GENIUS.

BUFFY'S PEOPLE IN S.F. HAVE BEEN TWEETING ABOUT THEM. THIS IS HOW VAMPIRES ARE NOW. IT'S LIKE... LIKE THEY LOST THEIR BLUETOOTH LINK TO DEMON CENTRAL COMMAND.

THANK YOU. SO, I GUESS ONE MADE HIS WAY HERE, TURNED OUR BULLY...

RIGHT, BECAUSE LOTS OF TIMES THERE'S JUST *ONE* OF SOMETHING.

BUT WHO KNOWS...IT SEEMS LIKE NONE OF THE OLD RULES APPLY.

I LIKE YOUR ROOM.

THANK YOU. I'VE HAD IT SINCE I WAS A KID. SO... UM...WHOSE PEOPLE IN S.F.?

YOU'VE HEARD OF BUFFY SUMMERS.

BULLY

IF I PRETEND I HAVE, WILL YOU THINK I'M SMART?

Quiet

THE FIRST OF THE SLAYERS. SHE LIVES IN S.F. NOW. MY OLDER SISTER RAN INTO HER IN A COFFEE SHOP THERE AND IT SEEMS LIKE SHE'S SCALED WAY DOWN, BUT SHE'S STILL DOING STUFF.

YOU KNOW A LOT ABOUT THIS STUFF? ABOUT SLAYERS?

I DO. I MEAN, I STUDY IT. AND I'VE HAD AN IDEA FOR A WHILE NOW. ABOUT WHO WOULD MAKE A GREAT NEW SLAYER.

OH! MY FRIEND, KATIE?

ME?! BUT SLAYERS ARE CALLED. THEY HAVE SPECIAL SKILLS AND STRENGTH--

ZOMPIRES HAVE TO BE EASIER TO KILL THAN VAMPIRES, BECAUSE THEY'RE DUMBER. I THINK THAT WITH A LOT OF TRAINING, EVEN WITHOUT SUPER--

CHXXXSH

RARRRRGHHHHHH!

RRRRRRRRRRRR

OOOF.

WHUMP

SNNNRRKRRLLLL

AARRUUUUGH

PAFT

AM I INTERRUPTING?

IT'S ALWAYS BEST TO GO WITH YOUR INSTINCTS.

THERE'S NO WAY THERE'S JUST A COUPLE ZOMPIRES. THERE COULD BE DOZENS.

OR HUNDREDS. OR THOUSANDS.

IT'S NOT YOUR RESPONSIBILITY.

I THOUGHT YOU SAID I COULD DO THIS.

I DIDN'T THINK ABOUT THERE BEING THOUSANDS. AND IT'S NOT LIKE YOU OWE THIS TOWN ANYTHING. NOT LIKE IT EVER DID ANYTHING TO PROTECT YOU.

MY GRANDMA SKY LIVES HERE. AND YOUR LITTLE SISTERS.

THOUSANDS.

NEXT WEEK IT COULD BE TENS OF THOUSANDS. BY THE TIME WE GET TO BUFFY, IT COULD BE UNSTOPPABLE.

THIS IS THE CRUCIAL MOMENT. BUT...

BUT I DON'T KNOW, DEVON. I'M NOT A REAL SLAYER.

WELL, WHAT MAKES A "REAL" SLAYER?

THEY'RE SPECIAL. THEY'RE CALLED. THEY'RE STRONG. THEY PUNCH REALLY HARD AND RUN REALLY FAST AND THEY'RE ALWAYS, ALWAYS GIRLS.

I THINK YOU CAN PUNCH LIKE A GIRL AND RUN LIKE A GIRL.

I'M TAKING THAT AS A COMPLIMENT.

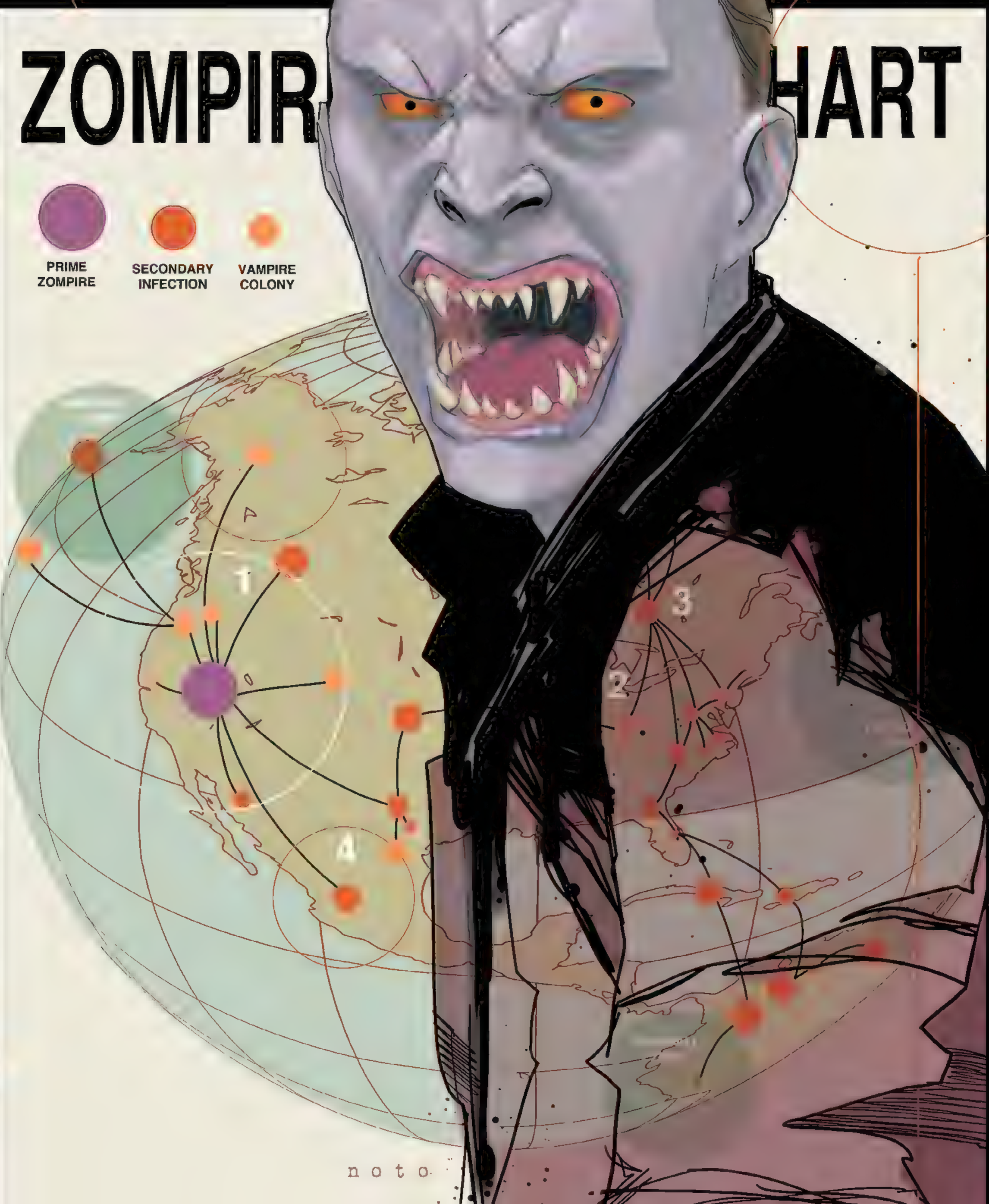
I MEANT IT AS ONE.

SO YOU'RE WILLING TO TRY? I'LL BE THE WATCHER AND YOU'LL BE THE SLAYER AND WE'LL BE MAGNIFICENT TOGETHER?

A BOY. ANOTHER BOY. A SUMMER DAY. SOMETHING NEW BEGINS.

OKAY.

ZOMPIR HART



noto

WHAT'S THE RIGHT WAY TO FIGHT BACK?

WITH COLD, CALCULATED STRATEGY? OR WITH SWIFT PRECISION DESIGNED TO STRIKE AT THE VERY HEART OF YOUR ENEMY?

OR SIMPLY WITH BROAD, POWERFUL, BLUNT FORCE?

G.P.H.S. DIVIS CHA BOYS BASKETBA 1982

SO, MY OLD NEMESIS. WE MEET AGAIN.

G.P.H.S. DIVISION 2 CHAMPS GIRLS SWIMMING 1991

I DON'T KNOW IF "NEMESIS" IS THE RIGHT WORD HERE.

Billy the Vampire Slayer

PART TWO

YOU'RE RIGHT. "FELLOW COMBATANT."

I ADMIT, HE'S STILL GOT SOME ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT.

WELL, SURE. HE'S ONLY BEEN AT THIS, WHAT, A COUPLE DAYS OR SO?

A WEEK, ACTUALLY.

AH. STILL...

BONK

I'M FINE! NOBODY PANIC.

BILLY'S TAKING ON SO MUCH RESPONSIBILITY JUST BECAUSE IT'S THE RIGHT THING TO DO. BECAUSE HE'S...GOOD.

WE NEED MORE PEOPLE LIKE HIM IN THE WORLD.

THE GUYS I HANG OUT WITH ARE ALL ABOUT APPEARANCES AND POSTURING. BILLY DOESN'T CARE ABOUT THAT STUFF. HE'S HONEST. HE TELLS YOU WHAT'S UP. I... LIKE THAT ABOUT HIM.

WAIT, THAT'S NOT ALL YOU LIKE! YOU *LIKE* BILLY, DON'T YOU?!

HEY, GUYS. I THINK I'M READY FOR MY NEXT TRAINING EXERCISE. THIS BAG IS PRETTY MUCH DONE FOR.

THUNK

AT SOME POINT, YOU HAVE TO COME UP WITH A NEW WAY OF DEALING WITH THESE EXERCISES. I'M RUNNING OUT OF SPEED BAGS.

AND I'M RUNNING OUT OF KNIVES. WE ALL MAKE SACRIFICES.

WHEN YOU CHOOSE TO FIGHT BACK, WILL YOU RUSH IN, PLACING VALUE ON SPEED...

OR WILL YOU FIRST TAKE THE TIME TO KNOW YOUR ENEMY?

CUBESMASHER V

LISTEN, WE'RE JUST HERE FOR A QUICK LOOK. WE GET THE INTEL WE NEED, WE TAKE OFF. OKAY? THESE ZOMPIRES HAVE BEEN SEEN ALL OVER TOWN, BUT EVERY NIGHT, THEY ALL STUMBLE OFF IN THE DIRECTION OF THIS STRIP MALL.

SO IT'S REASONABLE TO ASSUME THIS IS WHERE THEY CAMP OUT. BUT I DON'T WANT US TAKING UNNECESSARY RISKS. GOT IT?

YES. GOT IT. QUICK LOOK, RUN LIKE BUNNIES, DON'T GET EATEN.

SOLD.

ALL THIS STEALTHY SURVEYING...KINDA FEELS LIKE WE'RE BEING ALL JUNIOR DETECTIVE-Y, RIGHT?

WHAT, LIKE *THE HARDY BOYS*?

YES, EXACTLY! THAT'S SO PERFECT. I MEAN, YOU'RE TOTALLY FRANK. HE WAS OBVIOUSLY THE HOT ONE.

I DON'T KNOW. PERSONALLY, I ALWAYS THOUGHT JOE READ AS PRETTY CUTE. SORTA MADE ME SWOON, IF YOU MUST KNOW THE--

GET DOWN!

IT'S A NEST.

IN THIS CONTEXT, "NEST" IS NOT A TREMENDOUSLY COMFORTING WORD.

LOTS OF 'EM IN THERE. GATHERING THEIR FORCES. I'D SAY TWENTY OR SO.

MAYBE TWENTY-ONE.

HELLO, MA'AM. NOW, I DON'T WANT YOU TO TAKE THIS PERSONALLY, BUT I'M GOING TO HAVE TO PLUNGE A STAKE INTO YOUR CHEST. IT MIGHT HURT--

AIIIE!

PAFT

I COULD'VE DONE THAT.

FIRST OF ALL, RULE NUMBER ONE--ALWAYS KEEP YOUR STAKE IN HAND. SECOND, NO, YOU COULDN'T HAVE. BECAUSE YOU'RE NOT FIGHTING YET.

WHAT? WHY NOT?

WE'RE HERE, WE KNOW THEY'RE AMASSING NUMBERS, LIKELY IN PREPARATION FOR SOME KIND OF EVENT WHICH WILL PROBABLY NOT BE GOOD...

...AND NOW THERE'S SMILING. WHY IS THERE SMILING?

IS THIS A NERVOUS-LAUGHTER-IN-THE-FACE-OF-DANGER THING, OR--

I'M SMILING BECAUSE I'M IMPRESSED BY YOUR MOXIE.

MY...

YES. YOUR MOXIE. I KNOW WORDS. BUT AS IMPRESSIVE AS YOUR MOXIE IS...

YOU'RE NOT READY TO FIGHT.

IT'S MY JOB AS YOUR WATCHER TO DETERMINE WHEN YOU'RE READY TO WALK INTO A FIGHT AND WHEN IT'S BETTER FOR YOU TO TAKE YOUR INTEL, WITHDRAW, AND FORMULATE A PLAN TO COME BACK.

SO I'LL HAVE A BETTER SHOT AT WINNING.

NO.

SO YOU'LL HAVE A BETTER SHOT AT DECIMATING THEIR ZOMPIRE ASSES.

I'M JUST SAYING, THE RUSH WAS...

IT FELT LIKE...

I WAS ALL...

THUMPITY-THUMP?

YOU KNOW, THAT FEELING WHEN SOMETHING AMAZING IS HAPPENING AND YOU CAN FEEL THE BLOOD RUSHING THROUGH YOUR VEINS AND THE WORLD GOES QUIET, AND YOU'RE INTENSELY AWARE OF YOUR BREATHING AND ALL YOU CAN HEAR IS THE SOUND OF YOUR HEART JUST BEATING, GOING ALL...

...THUMPITY-THUMP.

YES. I KNOW.

IT WAS A RUSH. LIKE I WAS GETTING READY TO DO SOMETHING IMPORTANT.

YOU ARE. AND WITH A LITTLE PLANNING AND A BIT MORE TRAINING, JUST A FEW DAYS MAYBE, WE'LL BE ABLE TO GET IN THERE AND TAKE OUT THOSE ZOMPIRES. YOU'LL BE READY.

YOU REALLY THINK SO?

I REALLY DO. ACTUALLY, SPEAKING OF THUMPITY-THUMP...

...I'VE BEEN WANTING TO TALK TO YOU FOR A LITTLE WHILE. I WAS THINKING--

OH MY GOD.

...AT THE SANTA ROSITA PUBLIC LIBRARY, WHERE AUTHORITIES SAY A GROUP OF, QUOTE, FERAL VAMPIRES HAS TAKEN HOSTAGES.

SKY VOLUNTEERS AT THE LIBRARY.

WE'RE RECEIVING WORD THAT SEVERAL PATRONS **INSIDE THE LIBRARY** HAVE MANAGED TO SHOOT CELL-PHONE VIDEO FOOTAGE OF THE ATTACK...

WE SHOULD WARN YOU THAT WE'RE SEEING THIS FOOTAGE FOR THE FIRST TIME RIGHT ALONG WITH YOU, SO WE'RE NOT SURE YET IF WHAT YOU'RE ABOUT TO SEE IS...

...OH, DEAR.

MAYBE SHE GOT OUT.

EYEWITNESSES TELL US THIS WAS NOT A COORDINATED ATTACK, THAT THE VAMPIRES ONLY WENT IN FOR THE KILL WHEN THEY NOTICED MOVEMENT INSIDE THE LIBRARY.

SHE DIDN'T.

WHEN DO WE GO?

GO? GO WHERE? GO WHAT?

CLICK

TO THE LIBRARY. TO SAVE MY GRANDMOTHER. FROM THOSE ZOMPIRES.

WE'RE NOT GOING THERE. THE POLICE WILL--

THE POLICE? *THE POLICE?!* THE POLICE DON'T KNOW HOW TO DEAL WITH ZOMPIRES!

NEITHER DO YOU! *YOU* CAN'T BEAT THEM!

I DIDN'T MEAN YOU CAN'T BEAT THEM. I MEANT YOU CAN'T BEAT THEM YET. NOT WITHOUT A PLAN--

SCREW YOUR PLAN. AND SCREW YOU. SHE'S THE ONLY PERSON IN THIS WORLD WHO CARES ABOUT ME, WHO LOVES ME FOR WHO I AM.

BULLY

SHE STOOD BY ME WHEN NO ONE ELSE WAS THERE. NO ONE.

I'M SAVING HER. WITH OR WITHOUT YOU.

SLAMM!

NO MATTER HOW YOU CHOOSE TO FIGHT BACK...

...SOMETIMES, EVEN WITH ALL THE CHOICES BEFORE YOU, IT MIGHT FEEL AS IF YOU HAVE NO CHOICE AT ALL. AS THOUGH THERE IS ONLY ONE PATH.

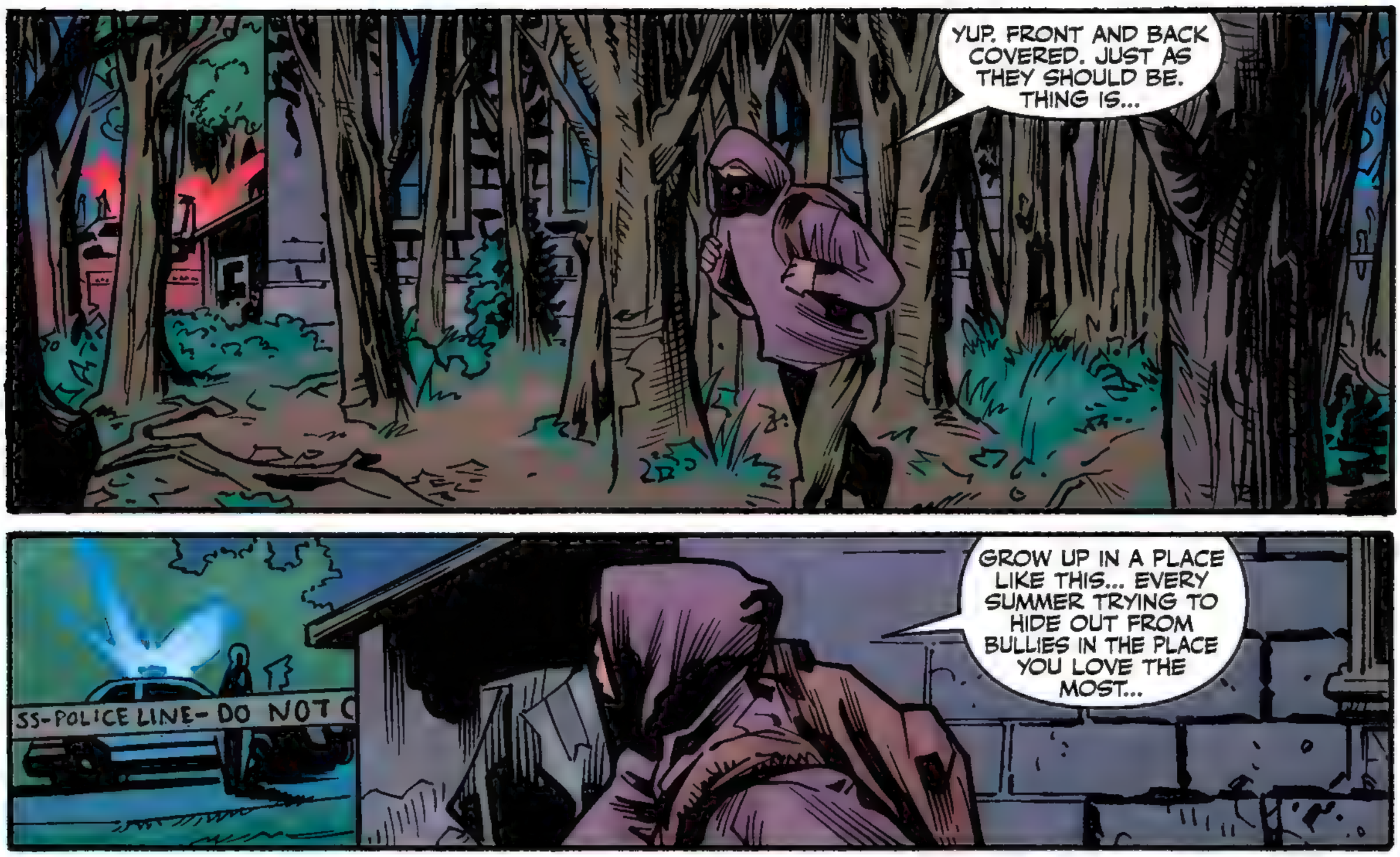
BUT EVEN WHEN YOUR OPTIONS ARE LIMITED...

...IT DOESN'T MAKE YOUR CHOICE TO ACT ANY LESS BRAVE.

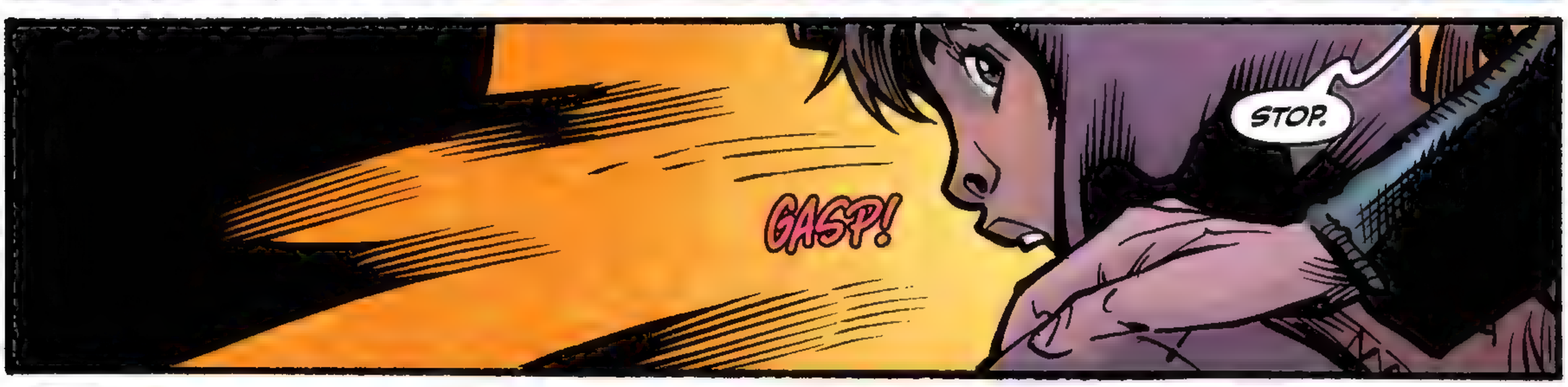
POLICE

POLICE LINE DO NOT CROSS

K-9


YUP. FRONT AND BACK COVERED. JUST AS THEY SHOULD BE. THING IS...
SS-POLICE LINE- DO NOT C
GROW UP IN A PLACE LIKE THIS... EVERY SUMMER TRYING TO HIDE OUT FROM BULLIES IN THE PLACE YOU LOVE THE MOST...
BUT BULLIES COME AND FIND YOU EVERY DAY JUST TO BEAT YOU UP...THAT HAPPENS...YOU LEARN TO FIND HIDDEN ESCAPE ROUTES...

SCRRRREEP
...AND YOU LEARN TO MAKE SURE NO ONE ELSE FINDS OUT ABOUT THEM.


GASP!
STOP.

COULDN'T HELP NOTICING YOU WERE TALKING TO YOURSELF. IS THAT A NERVOUS-TALKING-IN-THE-FACE-OF-DANGER THING, OR HAVE YOU JUST FINALLY LOST YOUR MIND?

ME? NERVOUS? HEY, NOT SURE IF YOU HEARD...

I HAVE MOXIE.

OH. I HEARD YOUR MOXIE LOUD AND CLEAR. RIGHT BEFORE YOU SLAMMED THE DOOR. YOU'RE FORGIVEN, BY THE WAY--

WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?

DIDN'T WANT YOU OUT HERE ALONE. I MEAN, I DIDN'T WANT YOU OUT HERE AT ALL, BUT I STARTED THINKING, I MAY NOT HAVE BEEN TOTALLY HONEST WITH YOU ABOUT THE WHY OF IT.

YEAH? WHAT'S THE WHY OF--

I LIKE YOU, BILLY. I THINK I'VE LIKED YOU FOR A WHILE.

AND I DIDN'T WANT TO LOSE YOU.

OH.

YOU LIKE *ME?*

YES. AND I'M SORRY IF YOU HATE ME, BUT I JUST WANTED TO DO WHATEVER I HAD TO DO TO KEEP YOU SAFE--

--WAIT, WHAT'S HAPPENING?

ha ha ha ha ha

I DIDN'T EXPECT LAUGHTER.

I CAN'T LIE. THIS IS DISCONCERTING.

YOU...I'M SORRY... YOU...LIKE ME? YOU'RE THE COOLEST GUY IN SCHOOL...

WELL, YEAH. SO WHAT? YOU'RE THE *SMARTEST* GUY IN SCHOOL.

I HAVE A THING FOR NERDS.

AND YOU VOLUNTEERED TO BE MY WATCHER?! THE PERSON WHO TRAINS ME TO GO INTO DANGEROUS SITUATIONS?!

WELL, OKAY, WHEN YOU PUT IT LIKE THAT...I MEAN...HEH...NO, I GUESS IT WASN'T THE BEST... HAHA...PLAN...HAHAHAHA...EVER...

HA HA HA HA HA HA HAH

OH, MAN. I NEEDED THAT.

LOOK...

...I DON'T WANT YOU TO GET HURT. BUT I KNOW I CAN'T STOP YOU FROM TRYING TO SAVE YOUR GRANDMOTHER.

YOU CAN'T.

AND I'M NOT LETTING YOU GO IN THERE ALONE. SO I'M GOING TO HELP. I'M GOING WITH YOU.

YOU DON'T HAVE TO DO THIS.

YOU HAVE NO IDEA HOW MUCH THAT ISN'T TRUE.

THEN LET'S GET DIGGING.

THIS OPENS UP INTO THE DUCTS THAT WILL TAKE US RIGHT INTO THE LIBRARY. I USED TO HIDE IN HERE ALL THE TIME.

GREAT...

AND AFTER WE CRAWL THROUGH TUNNELS, BREAK INTO A HOSTAGE SITUATION, FIGHT ZOMPIRES, SAVE YOUR GRANDMOTHER, AND DON'T GET KILLED...THEN WE CAN TALK ABOUT WHAT WE MEAN TO EACH OTHER.

WOW. BEING GAY REALLY IS DIFFERENT.

SHNINK

THE OFFICE WHERE SKY WAS HIDING ON T.V., IT'S ACROSS THE WAY.

ACROSS THE WAY...WITH SEVERAL HUNGRY ZOMPIRES IN OUR PATH?

THEY *WOULD* BE IN OUR PATH. IF WE WERE GOING STRAIGHT ACROSS. LUCKILY FOR YOU...

I CAN GET US THERE ANOTHER WAY. SPENT A LOT OF TIME IN THIS PLACE, BEING A GIANT NERD.

I KNOW HOW MUCH YOU APPRECIATE THAT.

THERE'S A STAIRCASE ON EITHER SIDE OF THIS HALLWAY. WE GO UP AND THEN TAKE THE WALKWAY ACROSS, WE'LL BE ABLE TO COME BACK DOWN AND GET INTO THAT OFFICE.

ASSUMING THE ZOMPIRES DON'T LOOK UP.

MEH. WE'VE BEEN TRAINING. WE CAN BE STEALTH. AND IF THEY COME AT US...I'LL JUST USE MY TRAINING TO--

--OOF.

GRAAAAWR

WRRRRR

BILLY!!

NO PROBLEM! I GOT IT!

THUNK

OOMPH!

PLINK

OKAY, I'M ACTUALLY GONNA NEED THAT.

SKITTER SKITTER SKITTER

UHHHH... OH.

PAFT

RULE NUMBER TWO-- ALWAYS CARRY A SPARE.

SORRY. I KNOW YOU PROBABLY WANTED TO DO THAT ONE YOURSELF.

OFFICIALLY FORGIVEN. LIKE, FOREVER. AND NOW...

WE RUN.

MY JOB IS TO FIGHT. THAT'S WHAT I'VE BEEN TRAINING FOR.

YOU HAVE TO SAVE MY GRANDMOTHER.

BUT YOU NEED--

--INSPIRATION. 'CAUSE THE TIME HAS COME--

--TO DUST SOME ZOMPIRES.

URRF!

GRRRRRUUH!

CRASH

IT'S *OKAY!* I'M HERE TO *HELP* YOU!

DEVON!

GRRARGH

BAM

PAFT

PAFT

UNGH!

PAFT

BILLY?

"THE RIGHT WAY TO FIGHT BACK..."

...IS TO REMEMBER YOU ARE NOT FIGHTING ALONE. EVEN WHEN IT SEEMS YOU ARE.

IT'S SOMETHING I'VE HAD TO REMEMBER LATELY.

BUT YOU'RE NOT ALONE. NEW TEAM. US.

WHICH MEANS WE'RE NOT ALONE, EITHER.

NO. YOU'RE NOT.

BILLY? YOU READY FOR YOUR FIRST PATROL?

HE'S READY. BUT GET HIM HOME SAFE.

IT ISN'T JUST THE WORLD THAT NEEDS HIM.

WHAT IS IT?

THIS CITY. IT'S LIKE A BEACON FOR PEOPLE LIKE US. YOU AND ME. PEOPLE WHO THOUGHT WE'D NEVER FIND A PLACE TO BELONG. STILL HARD TO BELIEVE. WE'RE WHERE WE'RE SUPPOSED TO BE, DOING WHAT WE SHOULD BE DOING.

FEELS GOOD, DOESN'T IT?

YES. IT DOES. AND JUST SO YOU KNOW...

...YOU BELONG.

IT'S BEEN MONTHS SINCE MAGIC LEFT THE WORLD. AND EVERYTHING'S CHANGED.

WILLOW, I GET THAT YOU MISS MAGIC, I DO.

BUT THIS IS OUR WORLD *NOW.* SO MAYBE FINALLY THIS IS A FIGHT WE CAN WIN.

BUT APPARENTLY I'M **NOT** THE ONLY ONE EXPERIENCING THE DOWNSIDE.

I FIRST REALIZED AFTER A BIG RAIN WHEN I SAW THE RAINBOW.

WITH TWO COLORS.

MUSIC, POETRY, EVERYTHING IS GOING BAD. THIS ISN'T JUST ME NOT LIKING NEW TRENDS.

NO ONE CAN HIT A NOTE, EVERYONE'S AUTO-TUNED.

LIVE TONIGHT

COKE DOESN'T TASTE RIGHT ANYMORE.

I SEE EXAMPLES EVERYWHERE. IT'S NOT JUST THAT THERE SUDDENLY AREN'T WITCHES AND THE OCCULT AROUND NOW.

SUICIDE RATES ARE MOVING UP EVERY DAY.

POLICE LI

IT'S THE INSPIRATION. THE DREAMS. ALL THE THINGS THAT MAKE LIFE SO WONDERFUL.

IT'S JUST NOT QUITE... **THERE** LIKE IT USED TO BE. SO I'M SETTING OUT TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT.

TO BRING MAGIC BACK.

I DECIDED TO TEAM UP WITH ANGEL, WHO'S ON HIS OWN MISSION TO BRING BACK THE LATE, GREAT RUPERT GILES. I GUESS WE'RE ALL JUST TRYING TO PICK UP THE PIECES.

TOGETHER, WE FOUND A WAY INTO THE MAGIC BLUE YONDER USING BUFFY'S SCYTHE. IT TOOK US TO A DARK PLACE, BUT I NEEDED TO FIND A LITTLE LIGHT FOR WHAT COMES NEXT...

WONDERLAND

PART ONE

SAY WHAT YOU WILL ABOUT INTUITION.

GO ON, SAY IT.

OKAY.

THINGS ARE GOING ON HERE. POSSIBILITIES.

AND ME WITHOUT A CAMERA PHONE.

HEY!

WHUMP

SO MUCH FOR MY SWEET AIR WALKING. BEST BE CAREFUL, AFTER WHAT ALMOST HAPPENED IN QUOR'TOTH...

GOTTA RELEARN SOME THINGS IN THIS BRAVE NEW WORLD.

LET'S START WITH AN OLD TRICK GILES TAUGHT ME FOR DIVINING ARCANIC CONCENTRATION.

IF I FIND A STRONG ENOUGH SURGE, MAYBE I CAN BRING SOME OF THIS MOJO WITH ME, WI-FI STYLE. SAVE THE WORLD, IT'S WHAT WE DO...

...BUT ALL THE RIFTS I OPEN SHUT TOO QUICKLY. EARTH'S PORTALS ARE CLOSED FOR BUSINESS. HERE'S HOPING THE WAY WILL PRESENT ITSELF WHEN I GET...WHEREVER.

OKAY. NOW, AN OFFERING...

...OF BLOOD...

UGH. NO! *BAD* TIME TO GO DARK WHEN THERE'S NO ONE TO SNAP ME OUT OF IT.

TAKE IT SLOW...ANY BODILY FLUID SHOULD DO.

THIS ONE'S FOR XANDER... HHHOCCH....

PTOOO

HM. UNDERWHELMING.

MAYBE I *DO* NEED BLOOD--

HYOOARRYYYAA

YAH!

OKAY... OKAY! THAT REALLY REALLY WORKED.

NEVER SHOULD HAVE DOUBTED YOU, WILLOW. NOW...

FOLLOW THE HELLISH BRICK ROAD.

SREEEEK

SKREEE

SREEEEK

AHH!

SREEEEK

I CAN STILL DO *THIS!* THANK ARTEMIS THE POWER'S BACK ON!

ESCUDO--!

VOOOSHPOW

SHREEE

SKREEE

TOO MANY!

OH CRAP OH CRAP!!!

WAIT, FLYING MONKEYS-- I'M COMING BACK!

BACK! YOU SLIMY-- UGH!!!--

THAT CAN'T BE...HER!

--TEETH!

COME ANY CLOSER AND I'LL--

...KEEP BACKING AWAY IN AN INTIMIDATING FASHION...!

SZFOOOSH

NOW WHAT...?

SCHOMP

AAAAND... THAT COULDA BEEN MY HEAD...

HUMANS ARE TOO SWEET FOR THE BOGWORM.

IT *FEEDS* ON THE WING-HEADS. YOU ATTRACTED IT BY ATTRACTING *THEM,* WITH YOUR PYROTECHNICS.

OH WELL OF COURSE!

FEAST WELL, SICKENING-MOUTH MAGGOT, HAPPY TO BE OF SERVICE.

THANKS FOR THE HELP...

CALL ME *MARRAK.* I AM A FELLOW CONJURER.

UM, LIVE AROUND HERE, MARRAK?

NO. I AM FROM THE SAME WORLD AS YOU, MISS...

WILLOW.

REALLY? BECAUSE I DON'T REMEMBER A TON OF ANIMAL-MAN SORCERERS, AND I KINDA GOT AROUND. GEOGRAPHICALLY, I MEAN.

DARK MAGIC MADE ME LOOK THIS WAY.

I HAVE COME HERE FOR YEARS, FOR... SUPPLIES I CAN GET NOWHERE ELSE.

I'VE TRIED TO GO BACK ACROSS THE VOID...AND CANNOT.

I COULDN'T ACCESS ANY OF THE ROUTES THAT WORKED BEFORE.

YOU'VE BEEN HERE A WHILE THEN. ALL ROUTES *ARE* CLOSED.

BUT IF YOU JUST MADE IT THROUGH, THERE MUST BE A PASSAGE.

'FRAID NOT. I HAD A ONE-WAY TICKET. MAGIC JUST...STOPPED WORKING. EVERYWHERE. ON OUR WHOLE WORLD.

BUT I'M HERE TO FIND A WAY TO BRING IT BACK.

IS THAT *TRUE? ALL* MAGIC?

GONE?

WHAT KIND OF BASTARDS WOULD *NEUTER* OUR WORLD LIKE THAT?

THIS JUST MAKES IT ALL THE MORE IMPORTANT TO BRING POWER BACK--AND WITH IT, ***VENGEANCE.***

OH, I DON'T THINK THAT'S WHAT THE WORLD NEEDS. MORE VENGEANCE, I MEAN...

YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT I'VE BEEN THROUGH.

IT'S TAKEN ALL MY WITS TO SURVIVE THIS LONG. I WILL DO WHATEVER IT TAKES TO GET BACK.

THIS TRAIL-- THIS DIVINATION SPELL YOU CAST-- IT WAS TO FIND SOME MYSTIC CACHE?

SORT OF. I CAST MY NET KINDA WIDE.

IMAGINE BEING BACK...THE ONLY WITCH IN ALL THE WORLD.

IMAGINE WHAT YOU COULD DO.

I'M NOT DOING THIS FOR ***ME.*** IT'S THE WHOLE WORLD THAT NEEDS MAGIC.

IF THERE'S SOME MYSTIC FAUCET TO TURN BACK ON OR WHATEVER, THAT'S WHAT I'M GONNA DO.

I'D GIVE ANYTHING TO RETURN WITH THE POWER I HAVE HERE. I WANT TO HELP YOU IN YOUR QUEST.

WELL, YOU KNOW THIS PLACE BETTER THAN ME.

BUT I'M NOT *REALLY* SURE WHAT TO EXPECT.

I STUDIED A *LOT* OF OCCULT HISTORIES BEFORE I LEFT.

"IF I CAN FIND A STRONG ENOUGH MAGICAL SOURCE--STRONGER THAN ANYTHING ON EARTH--I STILL HAVE TO FIGURE OUT HOW TO OPEN A PERMANENT CONNECTION TO OUR WORLD."

HAVE YOU CONSIDERED THAT *YOU* COULD SERVE AS THAT CONNECTION? *YOU* COULD BE THE SOURCE?

SOUNDS DANGEROUS.

IT'S GETTING DARKER, BUT I DON'T SEE THE SUN ANYWHERE.

THERE'S NO SUN HERE, NO MOON. YET STILL A DAY AND NIGHT, THE SAME AS OURS.

RRRUMBLE

YOU HEAR SOMETHING?

KEEWAA!!

AH!!

HEY NOW--!

HRAOMF

FLAMMA FRIGUS!

KZZZAAA

ZICK

MARRAK! STALL IT!

I HOPE YOU SAID, "KILL IT!"

HA!

VSZOOOSHH

SSSSSSSSS

HLLRR YUR-YUR-YUR!

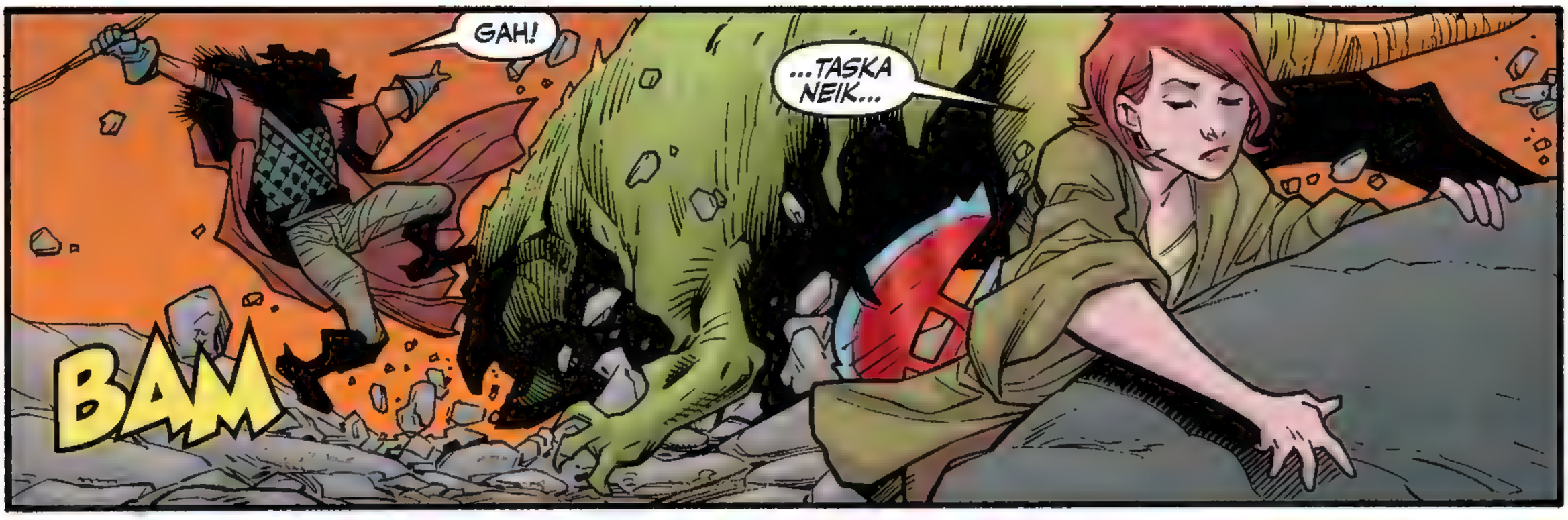
YUR-YUR!

IT'S... LAUGHING AT US.

WE'LL SEE WHO LAUGHS LAST!

I'VE GOT ANOTHER IDEA--KEEP IT BUSY!

YEVVLA KAHSH...TASKA NEIK...


GAH!
...TASKA NEIK...
BAM

USE YOUR BLADE!
YEVVLA KAHSH...

I'M MUCH BETTER WITH MAGIC! TASKA NEIK.
GOT IT!

YOU WANT TO LET IT CHASE YOU A WHILE?
JUST LEAD IT THROUGH HERE!

HRRUK!!

HA-HA! YES!

VOILÀ! ONE MASTERFULLY EXECUTED BINDING HEX, USING THE ROCKS.

WELL DONE.

THIS SHOULD HOLD IT FOR ABOUT SIX HOURS. BY THEN WE'LL BE LONG--

--GONE?

SHLNKK

HOW DARE YOU! I HAD IT UNDER CONTROL!

THIS IS AN UNFORGIVING PLACE. YOU CAN'T LET A FOE SIMPLY *BE.*

ALSO *WE* NEED TO EAT.

IT WOULDN'T BE SO BAD EXCEPT FOR ALL THE EYEBALLS AND RANDOM TEETH.

NOT THE WORST I'VE HAD.

STILL. IT WILL ALL BE WORTH IT WHEN I AM BACK AT HOME, MY POWER RESTORED.

MORE THAN COMFORTABLE.

YEAH-- OUCH.

THAT'LL BE GOOD TIMES, ALL RIGHT.

THE TRAIL MIGHT BE HARDER TO FOLLOW IN HERE.

MAYBE THIS FOREST ITSELF IS THE SOURCE WE SEEK.

THAT WOULD BE GREAT--OKAY, ENCHANTED FOREST, WE'RE HERE!

SHOW US WHERE THE MAGIC TREE IS, WE'LL TAP IT AND BE ON OUR WAY!

YOU JOKE, BUT LOOK!

WILLOW, I THINK YOU FOUND IT!

WELL, WE CAN FILL UP OUR CANTEENS AT LEAST.

NO, DON'T YOU GET IT?

I'VE NOT SEEN A SPRING SO PURE...RADIANT... LIKE THIS SINCE I'VE BEEN HERE.

MAYBE *THIS* IS WHAT WE NEED...!

HANG *ON* THERE A MINUTE, THIRSTY!

HAVEN'T YOU EVER READ A FAIRY TALE?

THIS WONDERFUL, BEAUTIFUL, CONVENIENT SPRING MIGHT PUT US TO SLEEP FOR A THOUSAND YEARS.

WHAT DO YOU PROPOSE? BOIL THE WATER?

I'M WORRIED ABOUT MAGIC, NOT DYSENTERY. HERE.

I'M NOT TOTALLY UNPREPARED.

THIS HAS JUST BEEN A PAPERWEIGHT FOR A WHILE NOW, BUT *HERE* IT SHOULD WORK.

AH. A PURITY PENDANT. DRUID?

YOU KNOW YOUR STUFF, MARRAK.

TWO MORE SECONDS...

IT'S SAFE! CHUG-A-LUG!

I FEEL...

WHOA. SOMETHING...

...IS UP.

"IT'S LIKE IT'S ALL HAPPENING...NOW..."

YEAH, YOU'RE THE SLAYER, AND WE'RE, LIKE, THE SLAYERETTES.

...GOT THIS, XANDER. I CAN HACK INTO THEIR SYSTEMS AND...

WELL, I LIKE YOU. YOU'RE NICE AND YOU'RE FUNNY. AND YOU DON'T SMOKE. YEAH, OKAY, WEREWOLF. THAT'S NOT ALL THE TIME. I MEAN THREE DAYS OUT OF THE MONTH I'M NOT MUCH FUN TO BE AROUND EITHER.

I-I CAN DO STUFF...BUT I GET TAPPED OUT QUICK, AND I'VE USED EVERY SPELL I KNOW... PRACTICALLY.

TARA? BABY? BABY, C'MON!

AND FOR TRUTH, I CHOOSE THE TRICKSTER.

HU- WOW!

OKAYYY! THAT'S A WHOLE NEW TWIST ON TOO--

--UM, DIDN'T GET ALL THAT, DID YOU?

I WAS JUST KICKED IN THE FACE BY EVERY FAILURE IN MY *LIFE,* IF THAT'S WHAT YOU MEAN.

I THOUGHT YOU SAID THE WATER WAS NORMAL!

YOUR AMULET PROMISED YOU'D NOT BE POISONED.

IT DIDN'T SAY IT WOULDN'T MAKE YOU RECALL THINGS MOST IMPORTANT.

WHO--!

THE POND'S A SPRING OF MEMORIES FROM WHICH YOU DRANK.

SAVE NOW AND IN TIME YOU'LL THINK OF ME WITH THANKS.

WHATEVER WE DO, WHEREVER WE GO...

OUR MEMORIES ARE ALL WE REALLY HAVE, YOU KNOW?

MARRAK, THAT WATER'S MAKING ME SEE A BIG FAT CATERPILLAR SPEAKING IN BAD VERSE.

YOU?

SAME THING.

ISN'T THERE ANYTHING ORIGINAL OUT HERE? THIS IS WAY TOO CLOSE TO SOMETHING RIPPED RIGHT OUT OF WONDERLAND.

FINE, I'LL KNOCK OFF THE RHYMING. BUT THIS *IS* THE ORIGINAL. I'M 3,000 YEARS OLD, YOUNG LADY! CARROLL BASED THAT CHARACTER ON *ME.*

I HEAR WHEN YOU SWIG THE REALLY GOOD ABSINTHE, IT GIVES YOU A PEEK OVER TO THIS LAND.

SO...THIS POOL ISN'T A SOURCE OF MAGIC.

JUST LIFE-GIVING WATER, IS ALL. WITH SOME ADDED BENEFITS.

WE'RE REALLY GRATEFUL FOR THAT, SIR.

IS THERE SOME SOURCE, SOME KINDA CONCENTRATION OF MAGIC?

SOMETHING THAT COULD PUT MAGIC IN A PLACE WHERE THERE ISN'T ANY, SAY?

WHY WOULD YOU BE LOOKING FOR SOMETHING LIKE THAT, PRAY TELL?

MAGIC WAS TAKEN AWAY FROM MY HOME. PEOPLE THERE ARE HURTING.

THEY NEED IT.

YOUR HOME HAS NO MAGIC IN IT?

SOUNDS TERRIBLE.

EXACTLY! THE WORLD NEEDS THE LIGHT--I JUST WANTED TO HEAL THE DAMAGE THAT'S BEEN DONE.

WILLOW--I KNOW YOU'VE TASTED DARK MAGIC. THAT'S WHERE THE REAL POWER TO CHANGE THIS LIES.

I HAVE. IT'S WHY I NEED TO STAY PURE.

YOU BELIEVE IT'S LIKE THAT? TELL ME, DO THEY HAVE *DARK SCIENCE* WHERE YOU'RE FROM, TOO?

KRNCH KRNCH KRNCH KRNCH KRNCH

DOES ANYONE HEAR A CRASHING SOUND?

KRNCH KRNCHKRNCH

LIGHT AND DARK ARE NOT SO EASILY DISENTANGLED--

UH, YOU DIDN'T HAPPEN TO KILL ANYTHING ON YOUR WAY HERE, DID YOU?

KRNCH KRNCH KRNCH KRNCH KRNCH KRNCH

KEEAARLLAAHH!

YOU DID, DIDN'T YOU?

THIS IS NOT GOING ACCORDING TO PLAN!

"PLAN"? USE THAT BINDING SPELL AGAIN! LIKE ON THE BEAST'S CHILD!

IT WORKS ON *ROCKS*, MARRAK! WE'D NEED SOME *REALLY BIG ROCKS!*

BUT HEY, PROPS FOR REMINDING MAMA WHY IT WANTS US DEAD!

ESCUDO--!

ZZZZ--

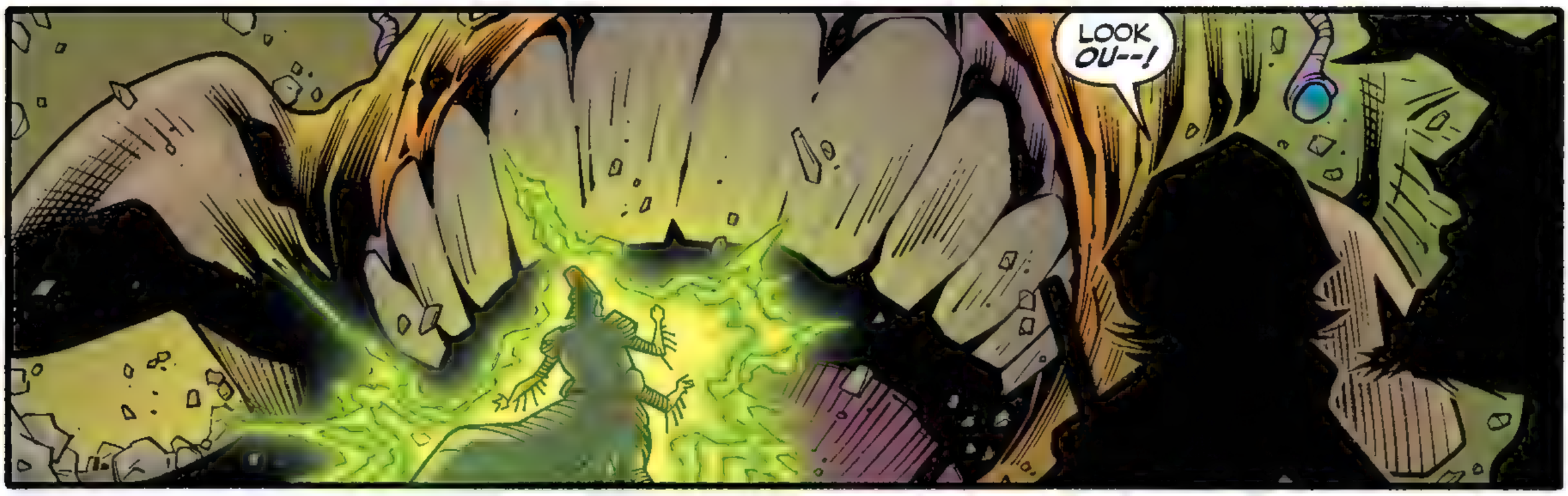
KAKK

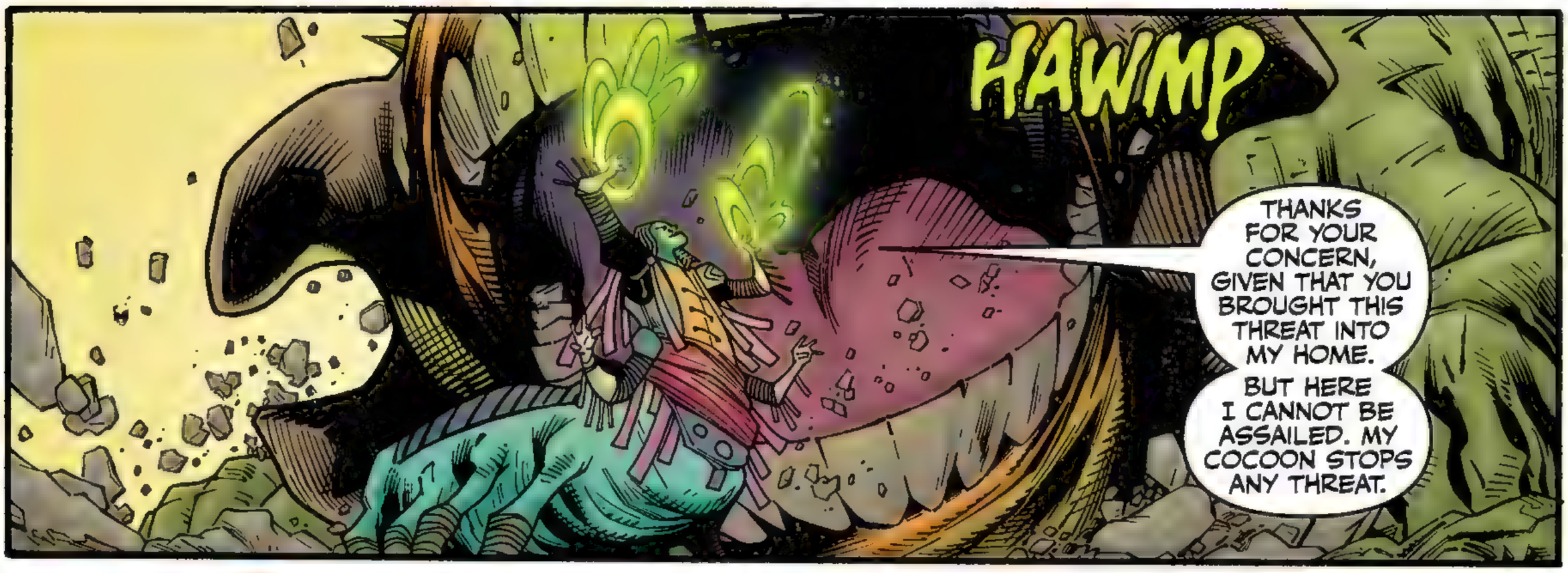
HRAAHRR!

GOOD ARMOR, EH?

OH NO--I FORGOT ABOUT CATERPILLAR GUY!

IT'S DISTRACTED-- *RUN!*





WONDERLAND

PART TWO

WILLOW! MY FOOT! CUT ME FREE!

NO TIME--

YOU CAN'T PENETRATE THAT ARMOR!

ELESA HOM EKTA BLIARÉ!

NNHHH!! WHAT ARE---?

CHOMMP

I HOPE THAT WAS A QUICK-KILL SPELL TO SPARE HIM.

FOUR... THREE... TWO...

WHHOOMM

GROSS!

WELL, THIS IS OFFICIALLY MY WORST MAKEOVER YET...

YOU KNOW WHAT'S *REALLY* NASTY?

BEING YOUR BAIT BOMB INSIDE THE BASTARD!

THE GREAT THING ABOUT THE PREY-INVERSION SPELL IS IT *TOTALLY* PROTECTED YOU WHILE NUKING SAID PREDATOR.

HISTORICALLY, NO ONE LIKES TO RESORT TO IT, THOUGH.

CAN'T *IMAGINE* WHY.

THANK YOU *SO* MUCH FOR FOULING MY SPECIAL POOL WITH THE GORE OF THE HYBERRAX.

I'M SURE THAT WON'T AFFECT THE PROPERTIES OF THE MEMORY WATER *AT ALL.*

SORRY, SIR. I KNOW SOMETHING THAT SHOULD HELP.

NYEKTA ZON. KIREN ARON. MASTEL WENS--

DARA ZON, DARA ZON!

THAT'S A VISIGOTH PYRE SPELL, ISN'T IT?

FOR PURIFYING!

YEP, AND LOOK.

IT SEGUES NEATLY INTO AN APPAREL ENCHANTMENT SO I CAN HAVE SOME FRESH CLOTHES.

YOU WANT A WARDROBE CHANGE TOO--

NO! YOU'VE CAST AT ME ENOUGH FOR ONE DAY!

IT'S LIKE A VERITABLE MAGIC WORKSHOP HAVING YOU TWO AROUND. STILL, FEEL FREE TO EXEUNT ANYTIME.

HOWEVER! SINCE YOU DID CLEAN UP AFTER YOURSELF--OR ***SHE*** DID, ANYWAY--TAKE A PARTING GIFT.

YOU'LL GET A PARTICULAR KIND OF ***THIRSTY*** FURTHER IN. I WOULD TAKE SOME WATER TO GO. AS I SAID BEFORE.

NEVER LET IT BE SAID THAT WILLOW ROSENBERG CAN'T TAKE A HINT.

CAN YOU TELL US ANYTHING ELSE ABOUT THE LAND BEYOND HERE? WHAT ANY BIG CONCENTRATIONS OF MYSTIC ENERGY MIGHT LOOK LIKE...?

LOOKING FOR A DEEPER WELL OF MAGIC, PERHAPS?

AT THE RISK OF SOUNDING LIKE SOMEONE FROM YOUR WORLD OF SCIENCE AND YAWNS...

...ENERGY IS RELEASED BY ***OPPOSING FORCES.***

THE LIGHT CASTS THICK SHADOWS, AND THE PATH OF RIGHTEOUSNESS...

...EMPLOYS SOME VERY DARK GATEKEEPERS.

I'M SURE THAT MEANS SOMETHING TO SOMEONE THAT'S NOT ME.

WHAT A HELP.

DOESN'T MATTER. THE DIVINATION SPELL IS STILL GOING THIS WAY.

LOOKS LIKE MY WAY IS CLEAR FOR MILES! THIS SHOULD BE A BREEZE. CAN I CAST 'EM OR WHAT, MARRAK?

YOU ARE STRONG HERE, NO DOUBT.

BUT YOU NEED SOMEONE WHO KNOWS THIS REALM.

I DON'T THINK WE'RE EXACTLY THE DREAM TEAM, MARRAK.

YOU WERE GOING TO LET THE CATERPILLAR GUY GET CHOMPED SO WE COULD ESCAPE. THAT'S NOT HOW I ROLL.

HE DIDN'T GET TO BE THOUSANDS OF YEARS OLD BY BEING HELPLESS!

YEAH, BUT STILL.

SO FAR I'M BUSTING OUT BIG MAGIC WITHOUT GOING ALL BLACK EYED AND TERRIFYING.

I START ACTING LIKE YOU, AND THAT'S WHERE I'LL END UP.

SO? THAT MAY BE THE ONLY WAY TO SUCCEED.

MAYBE FOR...YOU--

ARE THOSE *BLACKBIRDS* COMING THIS WAY?

BLACKBIRDS...?

OH NO...

CAREFUL, WILLOW!

DON'T LET THEM--

--TOUCH--

WHAT--

--HAPPENED...?
I'M HOME! WAS THAT A PORTAL?

XANDER! DAWN! HEY--

GUYS, IT'S ME, I--

--WHOA!

BUFFY.

OH MY GODDESS-- WHAT HAPPENED TO--

HEY! EVERYONE STOP! DON'T GO IN THERE!

WHAT'S HAPPENING?

WAIT. NO. THIS IS ALL WRONG!

THIS IS SOME HALLUCINATION... NEED A LUCIDITY SPELL...

AWAKEN... AWAKEN.

AH!

MARRAK! I'M BACK!

YOU DIDN'T GO ANYWHERE-- FAH!

BURN!

SKREEEE

PURGE FLAME, RIGHT?

SKREEE

RIGHT.

OKAY, WHAT THE HELLO KITTY WERE THOSE?

DREAMS--NIGHTMARES, MOSTLY. RECURRING DREAMS IN OUR WORLD START TO BECOME SOLID...ALIVE.

IF THEY'RE PUSHED OUT OR COME LOOSE FROM THEIR DREAMERS, THEY COME HERE TO TRY TO FIT THEMSELVES TO NEW ONES.

I'D SEEN SOME FLAPPING AROUND BEFORE, BUT ALWAYS ALONE. THEN A FEW MONTHS AGO A LOT MORE STARTED SHOWING UP. IT WAS WHEN THE DOORWAYS TO OUR WORLD CLOSED.

EVENTUALLY THEY STARTED FLOCKING TOGETHER. HARD TO AVOID WHEN THEY COME AT YOU IN WAVES.

I DIDN'T THINK WHAT WE--WHAT HAPPENED BACK HOME WOULD AFFECT OTHER REALMS. BUT OF COURSE IT DID!

DREAMS COULD ALWAYS CUT ACROSS THE VOID--THEY DON'T JUST TRANSPORT THE DREAMER--THEY TRAVEL ON THEIR OWN. BUT THEY MUST NOT BE ABLE TO FIND THEIR WAY BACK.

LIKE *ME.*

I DON'T KNOW WHO WAS DREAMING ALL THEIR FACELESS FRIENDS PLUNGING INTO HELL, BUT THEY'RE PROBABLY HAPPY TO BE RID OF *THAT* IMAGE.

WHAT NIGHTMARE GOT YOU?

ACTUALLY, I GOT HIT BY SOMEONE'S DREAM ABOUT... *NURSES.*

NOT SO BAD--BUT I STILL FREED MYSELF.

MAN.

WHY COULDN'T I HAVE GOTTEN THAT *NURSE* DREAM?

YEAH. THE DREAMER PROBABLY WANTS THAT ONE *BACK.*

THIS FOG HASN'T CLEARED FOR HOURS. I THINK WE'VE DROPPED A LOT LOWER...
YOU THINK THERE'LL BE A DEEPER WELL HERE, DON'T YOU?!

YES.
I MEAN, I'M GOING LARGELY ON INTUITION HERE.
BUT THAT'S NO LITTLE THING WITH ME. MY INTUITION IS PRETTY AWESOME MOST OF THE TIME.

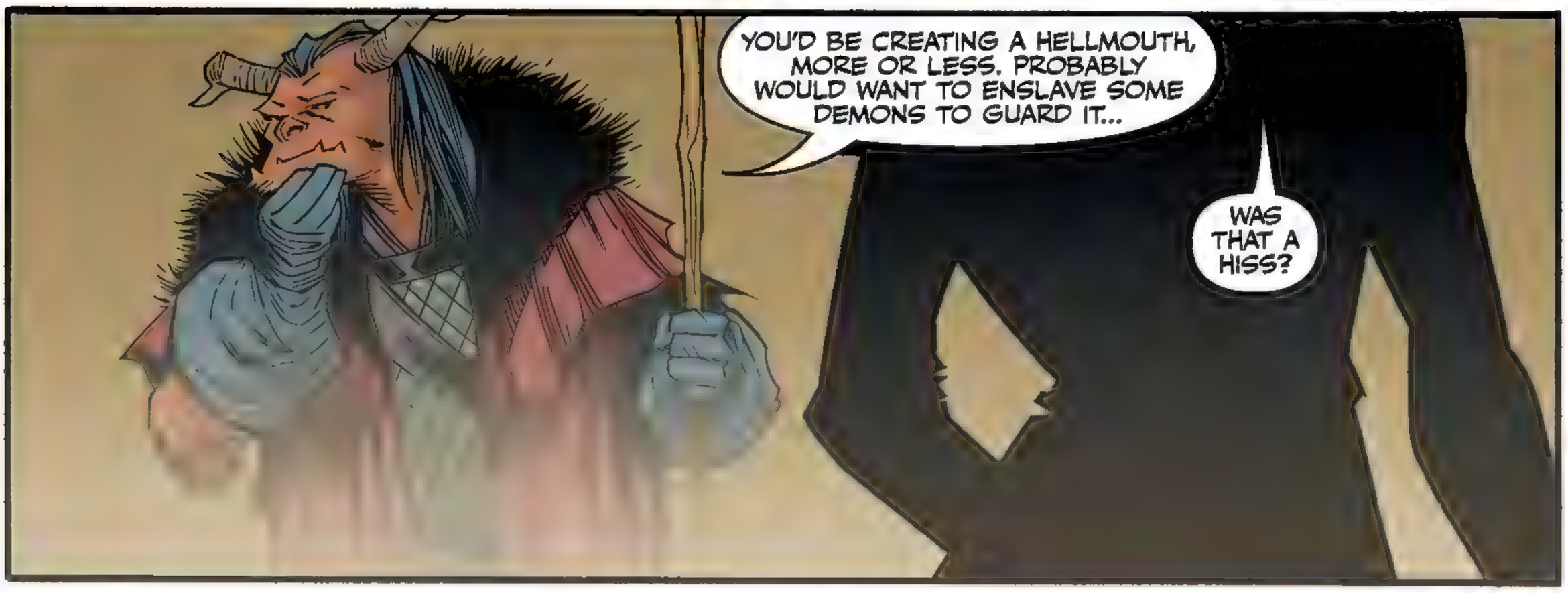
LIKE ON OUR WORLD, THERE'S THE DEEPER WELL. I'M HOPING THIS PLACE CORRESPONDS TO HOME THAT WAY, WITH ITS OWN HOT SPOT.
AND I'M BETTIN' MY TRAIL IS TAKING US TO IT.

YOU THINK THERE'S A FOCAL POINT OF MAGIC THERE?
WELL, IT MUST BE MASSIVE IN A PLACE THIS MAGICAL, RIGHT?
WE FIND THAT, I BREAK OUT THIS SCYTHE AND *FIX* THINGS. SOMEHOW.

AT A STRONG-ENOUGH FOCAL POINT OF MAGIC, I *SHOULD* BE ABLE TO ACCESS EVERYWHERE.
I'LL CUT OPEN THE PATH BACK TO OUR WORLD, LET MAGIC FLOW THROUGH AGAIN.
THERE--I GUESS THAT IS MY PLAN.

IT SOUNDS GOOD WHEN I SAY IT OUT LOUD, AT LEAST.
POSSIBLE. MORE THAN A PORTAL TO TRAVEL THROUGH, WE NEED SOME CONDUIT FOR MAGIC, OR I'D BE POWERLESS WHEN I RETURN.

AND BELIEVE ME, THAT IS NO FUN.
YOU AGREE IT *COULD* WORK, RIGHT?


YOU'D BE CREATING A HELLMOUTH, MORE OR LESS. PROBABLY WOULD WANT TO ENSLAVE SOME DEMONS TO GUARD IT...
WAS THAT A HISS?

YOU HEARD SOMETHING?
THERE AGAIN. DON'T YOU?

BIND HIM!
LET GO!
MARRAK!
STAY YOUR DEFENSES, WILLOW, SUPREME WITCH OF TERRA FIRMA.
I THOUGHT YOU WOULD NEVER LEAVE YOUR WORLD AGAIN...
STRIKE! STRIKE!

OH.

IT'S ACTUALLY YOU.

IT IS.

THIS BRUTE WITH YOU? OR SHOULD MY FRIENDS DEAL WITH HIM?

THAT'S MARRAK. HE'S OKAY. YOU CAN LET HIM GO.

REALLY.

HMF!

THIS LYING, DECEITFUL, SEXY SNAKE IS ALUWYN, THE SAGA VASUKI.

MY TEACHER OF THE HIGH WITCHING ARTS.

GREETINGS, *MARRAK THE OKAY.*

PLEASE DO NOT BLOCK MY VIEW OF THE GREATEST WITCH OF THE HUMAN WORLD.

THIS IS HER? WILLOW THE RED?

ROSENBERG THE ENCHANTRESS!

THE SLAYER'S HEX MISTRESS!

UM... HI...LADIES. GOSH.

HOW DID YOU COME HERE? WE HEARD YOUR WORLD WAS CUT OFF FROM MAGIC!

HOW COULD THAT HAPPEN...WITH *YOU* THERE?

I, WELL--IT'S A MEDIUM-LONG STORY...

YOU CAN TELL US AFTER YOU'VE RESTED.

IF YOU'VE COME FROM THAT DIRECTION, YOU'VE NOT HAD AN EASY STROLL.

REST SOUNDS *GREAT.*

CAN I AT LEAST OFFER A RIDE? PLEASE MOUNT ME, GREAT ONE.

TO *RIDE,* WILLOW.

THERE'S JUST NO WAY OUT OF THE DOUBLE ENTENDRE WITH THIS ONE.

THANK YOU.

I'M TIRED TOO...

HOW DID YOU KNOW I WAS HERE?

I DIDN'T--WE CAME OUT TO FIND WHAT CREATED THAT DIVINATION PATH.

THAT MEANS IT LED TO YOU...

INDEED.

BEHOLD, AS THEY SAY...

SOME REFER TO IT AS THE *WITCHES' PARADISE.*

AFTER I LOST YOU, I SEARCHED FOR A POINT OF POWER... A CONFLUENCE OF THE REALMS, AND FOUND WHAT LEGENDS CALL *THE WELLSPRING.*

I STILL WASN'T ABLE TO REACH YOUR WORLD, BUT I CALLED OUT TO OTHER WOMEN OF SORCERY I KNEW WOULD LOVE IT. WE'VE FORMED A *SUPERCOVEN.*

A WELLSPRING.

A DEEPER WELL.

C'MON, MARRAK, UP TOP! YOU KNOW I'M RIGHT ABOUT THIS. WELLSPRING? EH?

IT DOES LINE UP WITH YOUR IDEAS, BUT WE'LL SEE.

"SEE" WHAT?

SEE ME CUT A GATEWAY TO EARTH SO MAGIC CAN WORK THERE AGAIN.

AND I WON'T BE LOCKED OUT FROM THE GREATER MAGICAL UNIVERSE ANYMORE.

OF COURSE, I'D FEEL A LITTLE MORE PREPPED IF THE SCYTHE WERE IN ONE PIECE, BUT--

OH, NOW *THAT* IS A JOB FOR VULCANA.

EXACTLY THE KIND OF THING SHE DOES BETTER THAN ANYONE.

IT'S ALL COMING TOGETHER!

HEY GIRLS, REMEMBER ALL THOSE WILLOW THE RED STORIES?

WELL, HERE'S YOUR HEROINE IN THE FLESH.

WOO HOO!

REALLY, WILLOW!

SHE'S BEAUTIFUL!

BLESSED BE!

REST UP, MY DEAR.

WE HAVE A *LOT* OF CATCHING UP TO DO.

"NOW THE CEREMONY OF THE FORGING..."

A WEAPON BLESSED AS ITS COUNTERPART EXCALIBUR! A BLADE THAT HOLDS ITS POWER EVEN IN A MAGICLESS WORLD.

A WEAPON SO MADE CAN NEVER BE BROKEN!

A PERFECT DESIGN IS ETERNAL! STEP FORWARD, MIGHTY WILLOW THE RED!

COVEN, CHANNEL YOUR WHOLE! FOCUS ON US!

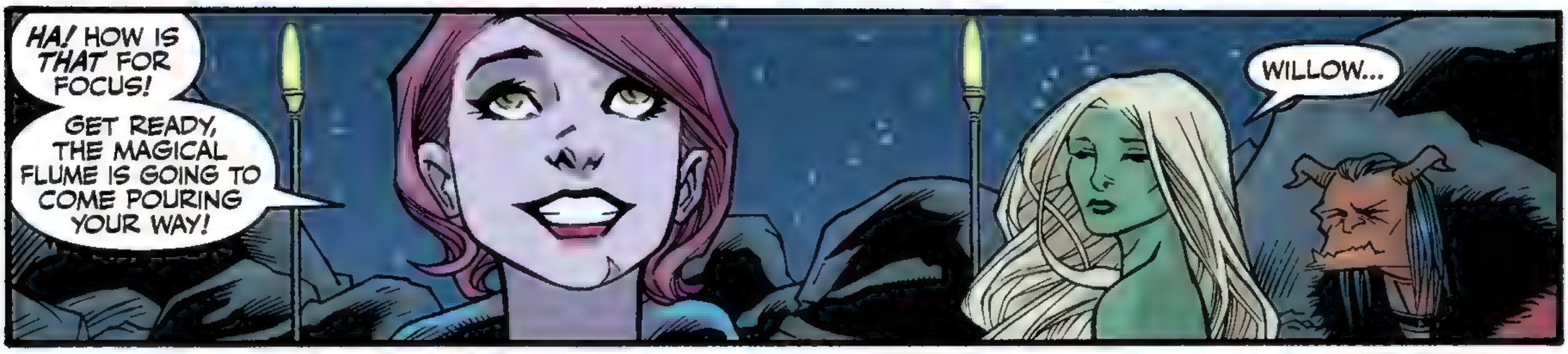
USE YOUR HEALING POWER... ***CAST!***

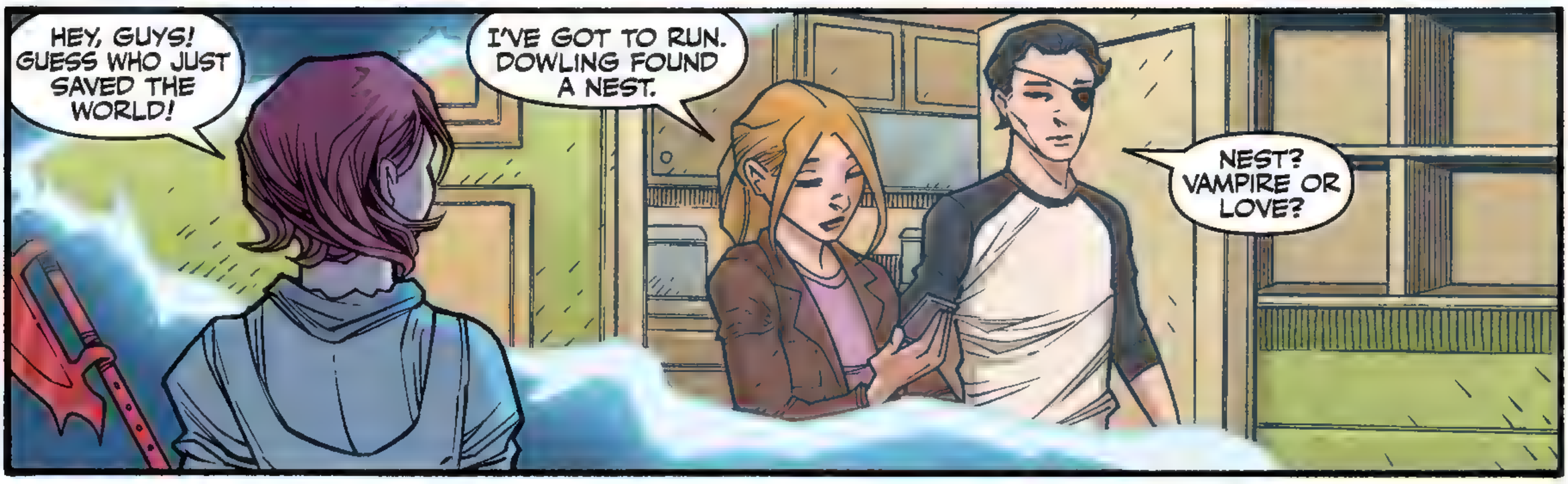
FWOOSH

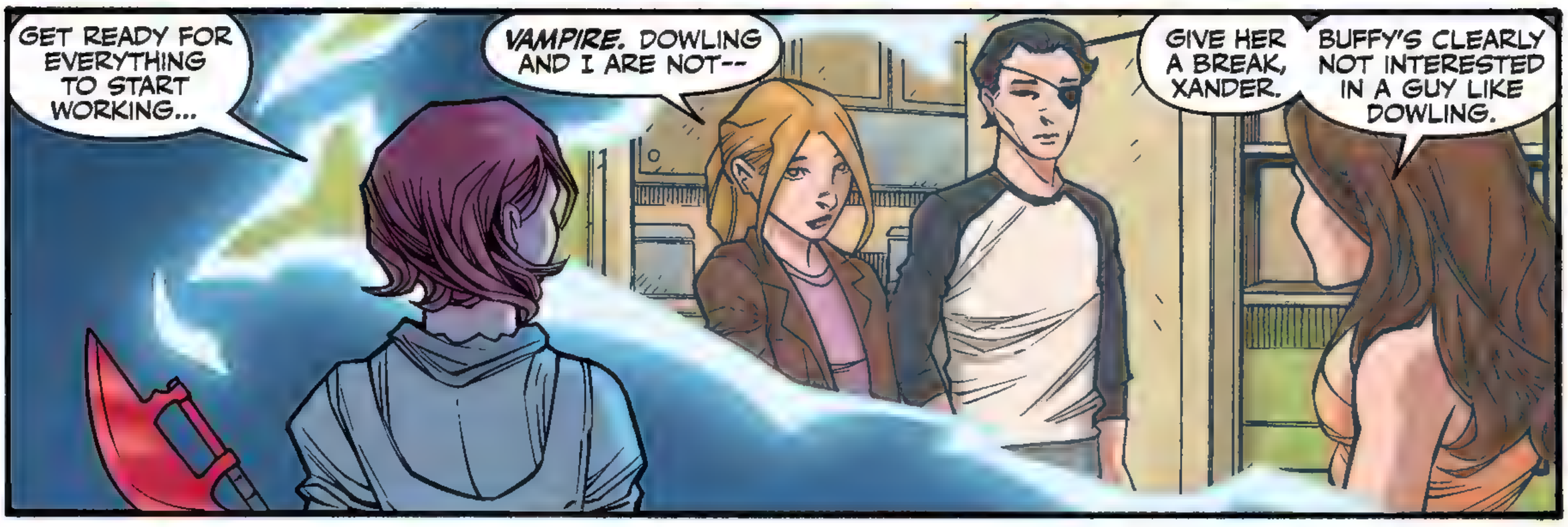
THANK YOU, SISTERS...IT'S...IT'S PERFECT!

WILLOW, YOU JUST GOT IT FIXED. MAYBE YOU SHOULD--
I'VE BEEN SAYING THE RIFT SPELL IN MY MIND FOR WEEKS!

N'YAR VRESH, TERRA EVELAR!


HA! HOW IS THAT FOR FOCUS!
GET READY, THE MAGICAL FLUME IS GOING TO COME POURING YOUR WAY!
WILLOW...


HEY, GUYS! GUESS WHO JUST SAVED THE WORLD!
I'VE GOT TO RUN. DOWLING FOUND A NEST.
NEST? VAMPIRE OR LOVE?


GET READY FOR EVERYTHING TO START WORKING...
VAMPIRE. DOWLING AND I ARE NOT--
GIVE HER A BREAK, XANDER.
BUFFY'S CLEARLY NOT INTERESTED IN A GUY LIKE DOWLING.

...NO, WAIT...STAY OPEN! XANDER! BUFFY!

THANK YOU.

WAIT. WHY WOULDN'T I BE INTERESTED IN A GUY LIKE DOWLING?

HE'S NOT YOUR TYPE.

DAWN...?

ALIVE.

I'M SORRY, WILLOW... I SHOULD HAVE TOLD YOU.

I'VE TRIED THIS VERY THING WITH EVERY SPELL I KNOW. AND EVERY WITCH HELPING ME.

FOR MAGIC TO OPEN A DIRECT PATHWAY THERE, THERE HAS TO BE MAGIC ON THE OTHER END-- WHAT YOU CALL A CATCH-22?

I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT MAKE THE DIFFERENCE. BUT IF EVEN YOU CAN'T DO IT...

...THEN MAGIC *CAN'T* RETURN TO YOUR WORLD.

OPEN, DAMN IT! STAY OPEN!

I DID NOT GIVE YOU PERMISSION TO CLOSE!

I TOLD YOU, IT'S IMPOSSIBLE. THERE'S NO MAGIC LEFT ON YOUR WORLD FOR A PORTAL TO ANCHOR TO.

NO! I WON'T ACCEPT THAT!

I'M THE GREATEST WITCH OF MY AGE! AND THIS IS THE SLAYER'S SCYTHE!

VURRRN

I'VE COME TOO FAR! WORKED TOO HARD!

SHHRRTCHH

OPEN.

OPEN!

OPEN!

UM, LOVE, I UNDERSTAND YOU'RE UPSET...

...BUT IT WOULD BE VERY NICE IF YOU DIDN'T CAUSE ALL REALITY TO COLLAPSE IN ON ITSELF.

MY REALITY *HAS* COLLAPSED.

I CAME HERE TO BRING MAGIC BACK TO MY WORLD.

WONDERLAND

PART THREE

NOW I DON'T EVEN KNOW IF I CAN BRING *ME* BACK.

SCREAMING AND PITCHING FITS. JUST LIKE A WOMAN. YOU HAVE TO *FOCUS* YOUR RAGE. TEACH THE UNIVERSE *WHO'S BOSS.*

GIVE ME THAT. I'LL *SHOW* YOU.

YOU *DARE?*

ZRK

AGH!

STUPID CHAOS WHORE, YOU THINK I DON'T SEE *THROUGH* YOU? YOU THINK--

I THINK YOUR PRESENCE *PROFANES* THIS SACRED PLACE.

GET OUT!

BEGONE!

AWAY!

EXILE!

THRMMMM

GHHGG!

AND TROUBLE US *NO MORE.*

I'M SORRY. I TRIED SIMILAR SPELLS, AND MANY MORE, TO REACH YOU. FOR ***MONTHS.*** WITH THE SAME RESULTS.

I SHOULD HAVE TOLD YOU. BUT I KNEW YOU HAD TO LEARN IT FOR YOURSELF.

ALL I CAN DO NOW IS GIVE YOU COMFORT. THAT'S THE STRENGTH OF OUR COVEN. JOINING TOGETHER HEALS ALL WOUNDS, EVEN OF THE SPIRIT.

MY WORLD'S ***ROTTING*** WITHOUT MAGIC. MY ***FRIENDS...*** I CAN'T JUST GIVE UP.

OF COURSE NOT. WE HAVE THE GREATEST COLLECTION OF WITCHES EVER ASSEMBLED, FROM EVERY CORNER OF THE MYRIAD REALMS.

WE'LL WORK TOGETHER. FIND A WAY. IT WILL TAKE TIME. IT WON'T BE EASY.

BUT ONE DAY, YOU WILL RETURN TO YOUR HOME.

WHAT IF I CAN'T?

THEN YOU'LL MOURN. AND I WILL COMFORT YOU.

AND IN TIME THE PAIN WILL STOP...

...SOONER THAN YOU THINK.

"COME SEE THIS, WILLOW OF TERRA FIRMA! ONE OF THE MANY WONDERS OF OUR WORLD."

I HAVE NAMED IT THE *GREAT HEART.* PERHAPS IT HOLDS THE POWER YOU SEEK?

NOW *THAT'S* A ROCK.

NO, IT'S A *GODDESS GEM.*

SORRY. TERRA FIRMA HUMOR.

WHAT DOES IT DO, BESIDES SPARKLE ENTICINGLY?

SOMETIMES, WHEN WE MEDITATE BY IT, ANSWERS COME TO US. VISIONS.

A FEW HAVE SPOKEN TO LONG DEAD FRIENDS AND LOVERS THROUGH IT.

OTHERS SWEAR IT'S SHOWN THEM THEIR TRUE LIFE'S PATH.

SIGN ME UP FOR "ALL THE ABOVE." DO I--

TOUCH IT? ONLY IF YOU WANT TO BE INCINERATED.

UM, PASS.

YOU THIRST FOR ILLUMINATION. LOOK TO THE LIGHT.

OKAY... *OH!*

IT'S *NOT* JUST LIGHT...I CAN *FEEL* IT. BRIGHT AS THE SUN, BUT I DON'T HAVE TO SQUINT.

I CAN SEE... SOMETHING...

A HARSH PLACE. LIKE THE END OF THE WORLD. I FEEL...DARKNESS. AN EMPTY SPACE THAT CAN NEVER BE FILLED.

IS...IS THIS WHAT HAPPENS TO EARTH IF I FAIL...?

WAIT, THERE'S SOMEONE THERE... A MAN. CAN'T MAKE HIM OUT, BUT I'M GETTING IMPRESSIONS...

HE'S STEEPED IN MAGIC. A TEACHER... *MY* TEACHER.

GILES?

MARRAK? HE HASN'T TAUGHT ME ANYTHING EXCEPT HOW TO PISS OFF ENTIRE DIMENSIONS. WHAT COULD I POSSIBLY LEARN FROM--

HEY! THAT'S IT? THE FINALE OF ***THE SOPRANOS*** WAS MORE SATISFYING!

LIKE ALL HEARTS, THIS ONE CAN BE FICKLE. AND SOMETIMES FALSE.

DON'T BE SAD, HEXMISTRESS. THIS WORLD HAS OTHER WONDERS. THE LAND HOLDS ONLY A FEW.

TO FIND TRUTH, ONE MUST OFTEN LOOK BENEATH THE SURFACE.

BUT HOW CAN I--

TAKE MY HAND. EVERY JOURNEY--

"--BEGINS WITH A FIRST STEP."

SQUITCH

ANIMALS. THE LOT OF 'EM. LIARS AND TRAMPS.

"I'M ON A QUEST TO BRING MAGIC BACK TO EARTH. IT'S *SO* IMPORTANT."

UNTIL SHE LAYS EYES ON A PAIR OF FIRM, SCALY--

GRAH!

CANCER IT'S CANCER NO TREATMENT NO HOPE

WILD DREAMS, EVEN *HERE?* GET AWAY, LEECH. BY YOURSELF, YOU CAN'T PREY ON ME WHILE I'M AWAKE, AND IT'S NOT LIKE I CAN SLEEP IN THIS WASTELAND...

HM. ON SECOND THOUGHT...

COME BACK, LITTLE DREAM. LOOK, I'VE GOT SOMETHING SHINY FOR YOU.

AND *YOU'VE* GOT SOMETHING FOR ME...

ALL DRESSED. THIS IS SO COOL... STRETCHY AND SOFT, BUT IT KEEPS ME WARM.

IT IS MADE FROM THE BLADDER OF A GIANT PUFFERFISH.

AND THERE'S THE TOUCH OF GROSSNESS IT WAS LACKING. SHOULD I GET THE SCYTHE?

NO. OUR JOURNEY IS ABOUT CONNECTING, NOT SEPARATING.

COME HERE.

WHOA, OKAY, I'M ALL FOR CONNECTING, BUT I'M A ONE-WOMAN WOMAN.

WHEN I'M NOT TOTALLY SCREWING UP.

I MUST ENCHANT YOU SO YOU CAN BREATHE UNDERWATER.

YES, RIGHT, OF COURSE. I KNEW THAT. ENCHANT AWAY.

I CAN'T DO THIS FOR ALL, BUT YOUR SPECIES MUST HAVE AN AMPHIBIOUS PAST.

WELL, WE DON'T LIKE TO TALK ABOUT IT, BUT--OH.

OH, *WOW!* ARE THESE--

GILLS. AND QUITE FETCHING ONES, IF I MAY SAY.

AND BACK TO THE AWKWARD. SEE, ***ONE-WOMAN WOMAN***--

I TEASE. I PREFER LOVERS WITH BIG, THICK DORSAL FINS.

THE ENCHANTMENT HAS A LIMITED DURATION. FOLLOW ME.

IT'S *AMAZING.* LIKE THE SUBMARINE RIDE AT DISNEYLAND, IF IT WERE IMAX AND REAL AND--

WAIT-- HOW ARE WE TALKING?

MAGIC, OF COURSE.

AND YES, IT IS LOVELY. EVEN MORE THAN THE OCEAN I LEFT BEHIND.

DO YOU MISS IT?

BARELY AT ALL. IT SEEMS LIKE A LIFE LIVED BY SOMEONE ELSE...OR A DREAM OF ONE.

I KNOW WHAT YOU MEAN. I FEEL LIKE PARTS OF MY OLD LIFE ARE... DISAPPEARING.

BUT I REMEMBER BUFFY... XANDER...

LOOK. JUST BELOW THIS OUTCROPPING.

OH. MY. GOSH.

SPECTACULAR, ISN'T IT? ONLY ALUWYN HAS SEEN IT. THIS, YOU CAN TOUCH. IN FACT, YOU *MUST.*

I HEAR... *VOICES...* FROM INSIDE...

NO, NOT VOICES. IT'S *TALKING* TO ME, BUT ON SOME OTHER LEVEL...

I CAN ALMOST... MAKE IT OUT...

AH. OH, YES, I...IT'S SO MUCH, ALL AT ONCE, BUT I *UNDERSTAND*...

NO, NOT EVERYTHING. YOU'RE RIGHT, IT'S NOTHING SO COSMIC. I DON'T UNDERSTAND THE UNIVERSE...BUT I FEEL WHERE I *BELONG* IN IT. AND THAT'S SEVERAL PLACES AT ONCE.

WELL, YES, OF COURSE I KNOW THERE'S GOOD IN EVERYTHING. AND EVIL, TOO. YOU NEED ONE TO GIVE THE OTHER MEANING. I DON'T MEAN TO BE RUDE, BUT THAT'S KIND OF A CLICHÉ.

NO, YOU'RE RIGHT...NOT WHEN YOU SEE IT LIKE THIS. YOU'RE SAYING EVEN MY DARK SIDE... AND...WHO?

WAIT, WILL I REMEMBER THIS WHEN IT'S OVER?

IMPRESSIONS? HOW IS THAT FAIR? PLEASE, IF I COULD JUST UNDERSTAND EVERYTHING THE WAY I DO NOW, I COULD MAKE IT ALL--

AND THEN IT JUST *STOPPED.* LEAVING ME WITH THAT FEELING LIKE WHEN YOU FIGURE OUT SOMETHING BRILLIANT AND PROFOUND IN A DREAM...

...BUT YOU WAKE UP, AND ALL YOU REMEMBER IS THAT YOU KNEW THIS AMAZING THING, AND NOW IT'S JUST OUT OF REACH.

I'M SORRY YOU DIDN'T FIND ANYTHING.

BUT I *DID.* FOR A MOMENT, I SAW ALL OF EXISTENCE, AND MY PLACE IN IT. I WOULDN'T TRADE THAT FOR ANYTHING.

I ALSO FOUND A GROUP OF AMAZING WOMEN WHO TRIED EVERYTHING TO HELP ME.

THAT'S WORTH WHATEVER I WENT THROUGH TO GET HERE.

YOUR LESSONS AREN'T OVER. THOUGH YOU ARE THE MOST POWERFUL WITCH OF YOUR WORLD, THERE IS STILL SOMETHING WE CAN TEACH YOU.

OUR DRINKING SONGS.

THE BEST PART? MAGIC WINE. NO HANGOVER.

THIS *IS* PARADISE.

IN ALL SERIOUSNESS, WILLOW, WE *ARE* HERE FOR YOU. ALWAYS. THAT IS WHAT HOLDS US TOGETHER.

MOST OF US CAME HERE SEARCHING FOR ANSWERS. RUNNING FROM SOMETHING...OR *TO* SOMETHING. VARIED GOALS AND WINDING WAYS LED US TO THIS LAND.

I DON'T THINK ANY OF US FOUND WHAT WE SOUGHT. INSTEAD...

...WE FOUND WHAT WE *NEEDED.* A COMMUNITY THAT UNDERSTANDS US AS NO OTHER COULD. A PLACE TO *BELONG.*

AS YOU SAY, NO PRESSURE. AS LONG AS YOU WISH IT, WE WILL TRY TO HELP WITH YOUR QUEST.

BUT WHENEVER YOU CHOOSE... WHENEVER IT FEELS RIGHT...WE WOULD LOVE FOR YOU TO STAY, IF YOU WOULD HAVE US.

HEAR, HEAR.

I...I THINK I'D LIKE THAT. THANK YOU.

BUT I'M...NOT QUITE READY TO GIVE UP YET.

CLINK CLINK

THEN LET'S DRINK TO WHAT WE WANT...*AND* WHAT WE NEED.

CLINK

CLINK

AND TO THEIR BEING THE SAME THING.

CLINK

A WORLD WITH AN OCEAN AT ITS CENTER.

A DEEP CORE OF MYSTERY, WONDER, AND REVELATION.

I'M SURE THERE'S A GRAND METAPHOR I COULD MAKE ABOUT MAGIC, OR WOMANHOOD, OR SOMETHING EQUALLY POETIC.

BUT RIGHT NOW ALL I CAN THINK ABOUT IS--

--THAT ADORABLE LITTLE FLYING OCTOPUS!

WANT WANT *WANT!*

OMIGOSH, I JUST THOUGHT OF THE BEST NAME FOR YOU. MR. OCTOPUS FANTASTICUS!

HEY, CUTENESS! COME BACK! DON'T BE SCARED!

THERE'S NOTHING HERE THAT'S GOING TO HURT YOU!

SEXY SEA-SERPENT ATTACK! *CHOMP!*

YAH!

YOU SCARED THE WITCH OUT OF ME! AND *TOTALLY* TURNED ALL MY MERMAID FANTASIES INTO *SHARK* MOVIES.

I JUST DIDN'T WANT YOU TO BE ALONE. YOU'RE THINKING ABOUT YOUR OLD LIFE.

I'LL HAVE YOU KNOW I WAS THINKING ABOUT HOW *AWESOME* I AM. AND HOW I DESPERATELY NEED A ROLY-POLY LITTLE LIVING TUB TOY.

AND MAYBE JUST A COUPLE OF SADS. MY FRIENDS STILL NEED ME.

I THINK THE AERO-CEPHS LIVE OVER HERE.

AT LEAST, I KEEP *TELLING* MYSELF THEY NEED ME. THE TRUTH IS...WHEN I THINK ABOUT IT NOW, THEY SEEMED TO BE DOING FINE. *I'M* THE ONE WHO WAS FALLING APART.

WITHOUT MAGIC, I'M BACK TO BEING PART HACKER, PART HOSTAGE, WHILE MY SUPERPEEPS KICK EVIL'S BUTT.

I WAS SO CONVINCED THE WORLD NEEDS MAGIC. THAT LIFE ON EARTH IS FUNDAMENTALLY *MISSING* SOMETHING.

BUT MAYBE...

...MAYBE IT WAS JUST *ME.*

I FEEL SO AT PEACE HERE. SO...*WHOLE.* THAT WASN'T ALWAYS TRUE BACK HOME. BECOMING SORCERESS SUPREME PUT SOME PRETTY *UN*-WONDERFUL PEOPLE IN MY PATH...

...WHICH SOMETIMES BROUGHT OUT THE WORST IN *ME.* BUT I HAVEN'T FELT LIKE THAT *ONCE* SINCE I'VE BEEN HERE.

STILL, AFTER ALL THAT'S HAPPENED, AS FAR AS I'VE COME... I FEEL LIKE *GIVING UP* WOULD BE...

LOSING CONTROL? I KNOW YOU ASSOCIATE THAT WITH YOUR DARK SIDE. BUT WASN'T *SHE* REALLY AN ATTEMPT AT *TOTAL* CONTROL?

THAT'S NOT TRUE MAGIC. BY ITS VERY NATURE, MAGIC IS UNPREDICTABLE. WE CAN'T ALWAYS CHOOSE OUR PATH. BUT THAT DOESN'T MEAN WE AREN'T HEADING IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION.

YOUR PATH LED TO ME.

IF YOU THINK SWEET TALK WILL MAKE ME FEEL BETTER, YOU'RE COMPLETELY AND UNABASHEDLY RIGHT.

THAT'S WEIRD. ALL THESE LITTLE CUTIES LIVE ON THAT TINY ISLAND?

NO, WAIT, THEY'RE-- WHAT ARE THEY DOING? BURROWING *INTO* IT?

OH, DEAR.

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE CUTE?

GWAAAARH!

THAT IS NOT CUTE!

SWEET LITTLE EYES. ADORABLE STUBBY TENTACLES. THAT WAS *WORKING* FOR ME.

THEY'RE A *COLLECTIVE.* THERE ARE SEVERAL IN THIS WORLD.

IT'S EASIER TO FEED WHEN YOU CAN SPREAD YOURSELF INTO MULTIPLE SMALLER BEINGS.

YEAH, WELL, *HELLO CTHULHU* HERE SEEMS TO WANT TO EAT *US* WHEN HE'S A HUGE GIANT HORROR.

YOU'RE THE BATTLE WITCH. YOUR SCYTHE--

NO. LET'S SHOW IT--

--WE'RE STRONGER WHEN WE JOIN TOGETHER *TOO.*

I DON'T WANT TO KILL IT. IT'S JUST TRYING TO SURVIVE. I'M THE ONE WHO CHASED IT LIKE A CRAZY CAT LADY.

THEN IT MUST LEARN WE ARE NOT APPETIZING.

MUCH AS I MIGHT PERSONALLY DISAGREE.

HOT, ISN'T IT? KEEP GETTING HANDSY AND YOU'LL DRY OUT YOUR NICE, SLIMY SKIN.

GWAAAAHH!

THERE YOU GO, BIG GUY. SOME THINGS AREN'T WORTH THE GRIEF, ARE THEY?

WHY TROUBLE YOURSELF WITH THE CHAOS ON THE SURFACE WHEN YOU CAN LOSE YOURSELF IN THE CALM, SOOTHING DEPTHS?

WOG WAH GAHW

GOTCHA. FROM NOW ON I ONLY ADOPT ELDER GODS FROM SHELTERS.

WE DID IT!

OF COURSE WE DID.

WE WERE *TOGETHER.*

I'M SORRY. OTHERS HAVE RUN INTO THAT CREATURE. I DIDN'T MAKE THE CONNECTION WITH THE SMALLER BEINGS. I SHOULD HAVE.

AND I SHOULD HAVE THANKED YOU SOONER FOR REPELLING IT THE WAY I WANTED.

SOME PEOPLE WOULD HAVE KILLED IT JUST FOR BEING ITSELF.

HOW DID THE OTHER WITCHES DEAL WITH IT?

THEY *RAN.* I THINK WE'RE THE FIRST TO EVEN ATTEMPT FIGHTING SUCH A THING.

AND WE KICKED ITS SLIMY BUTT.

I GUESS TOGETHER WE'RE UNSTOPPABLE.

THEN LET'S NOT STOP.

I'M PRETTY SURE THIS IS A DREAM.

LET'S SEE...FLYING? I CAN DO THAT IN REAL LIFE. SENSE OF CONTENTMENT AND BLISS? ACTUALLY GETTING A GOOD AMOUNT OF THAT IN REAL LIFE TOO.

BUT I THINK THE BOOB CLOUDS ARE PRETTY DEFINITIVELY SAYING "DREAM." CAN'T ESCAPE THE OLD NEUROSES, EVEN WHEN THERE'S NO ONE AROUND TO--

WILLOW!

WRAAK!

WILLOWWWW!

HUH?

MARRAK? GREAT. HERE COMES THE GUILT TRIP OVER KILLING THOSE BIG TOOTHY MONSTERS.

I'M NOT A FIGMENT OF YOUR SUBCONSCIOUS, YOU SELF-ABSORBED TWIT!

IT'S ME. I POSSESSED ONE OF THE FERAL DREAM BIRDS. AND I DON'T MIND TELLING YOU IT WASN'T EASY OR PLEASANT. THEY TASTE LIKE NIGHT SWEATS AND DESPAIR.

HOW *DARE* YOU?

GET OUT OF MY HEAD, YOU-- YOU *DREAM PEEPER!*

PLEASE. EVEN ENHANCED BY WISHFUL THINKING YOU HAVEN'T GOT ANYTHING I'D SUFFER THROUGH THIS TO SEE.

YOUR DAMNED SUPERCOVEN BANISHED ME TO THIS WASTELAND. I HAD NO OTHER WAY TO REACH YOU.

BUT I'VE *FOUND* SOMETHING HERE. ANCIENT SIGNS. THEY COULD LEAD TO THE *FONT OF MAGIC* WE WERE LOOKING FOR. YOU NEED TO GET HERE *NOW.*

YOU SAID "ANCIENT." THAT MEANS WHATEVER YOU'VE FOUND ISN'T GOING ANYWHERE.

I'LL CHECK IT OUT AFTER I FINISH SOME THINGS HERE. WHEN I FEEL...READY AGAIN.

WHEN YOU--? YOU WENT THROUGH HELL TO FIND THIS!

A HELL *DIMENSION.* AND NOW I'M SOMEPLACE MUCH NICER.

STUPID GIRL. YOU'RE IN A MYSTIC OPIUM DEN.

YOU'VE STUDIED YOUR OWN KIND, RIGHT? YOU KNOW WHY WITCHES FORM COVENS?

BECAUSE TOGETHER WE'RE A FORCE OF NATURE. WE COMPLETE EACH--

SPARE ME THE WOMEN'S STUDIES CRAP. YOU'RE A HIVE WHERE EVERYONE'S QUEEN.

IT FEELS GREAT. LIKE A HIT OF YOUR FAVORITE DRUG. BECAUSE THAT'S WHAT IT IS.

I AM *NOT* ABUSING MAGIC.

YOU DON'T HAVE TO. THERE'S SO MUCH FLYING AROUND, YOU KEEP EACH OTHER DOPED AROUND THE CLOCK. A SELF-SUSTAINING CONTACT HIGH.

REMEMBER THEM? THE PEOPLE YOU SAID NEEDED YOUR HELP? THE PLANET THAT WAS SUPPOSEDLY DYING?

SEEMS LIKE THAT'S THE DREAM, DOESN'T IT? A DIM MEMORY. THEY USED TO BE SO IMPORTANT, BUT NOW... SCREW 'EM. YOU GOT WHAT WAS REALLY IMPORTANT.

WHAT YOU REALLY CAME FOR.

GET OUT OF MY DREAM!

IT'S NOT A DREAM! IT'S A STUPOR! THEY'VE GOT THEIR HOOKS IN YOU AND THEY'LL NEVER LET GO!

YOU'RE LYING! YOU'RE JUST JEALOUS BECAUSE I HAVE WHAT YOU WANT! YOU'RE--

AH!

GH

HE WAS LYING.

IT'S ALL A LIE...

MACK

MMM...DID YOU SAY SOMETHING?

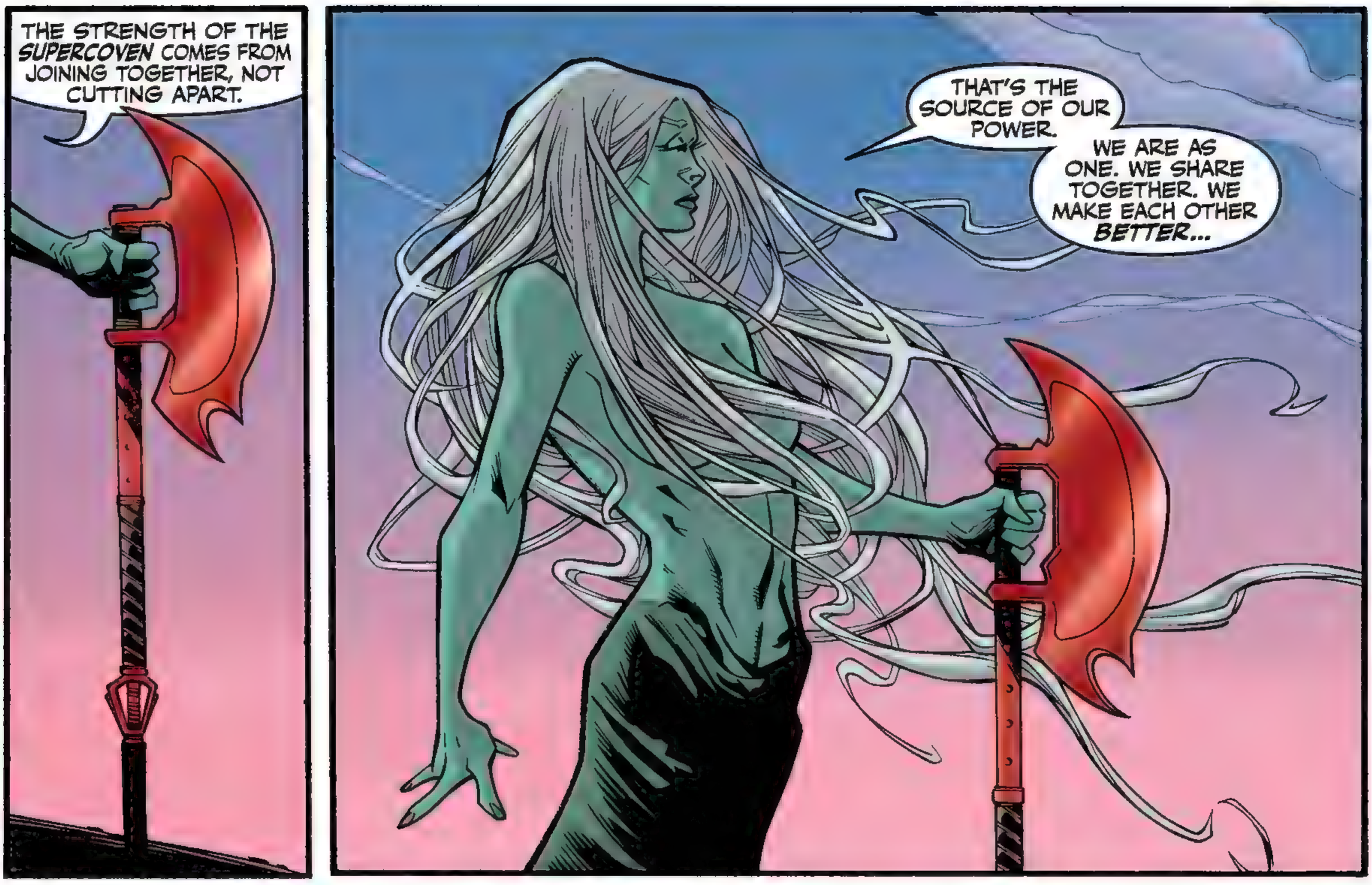
WILLOW? ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?

IT'S A *STUPOR!* THEY'VE GOT THEIR HOOKS IN YOU AND THEY'LL *NEVER LET GO!*

BAD DREAM.

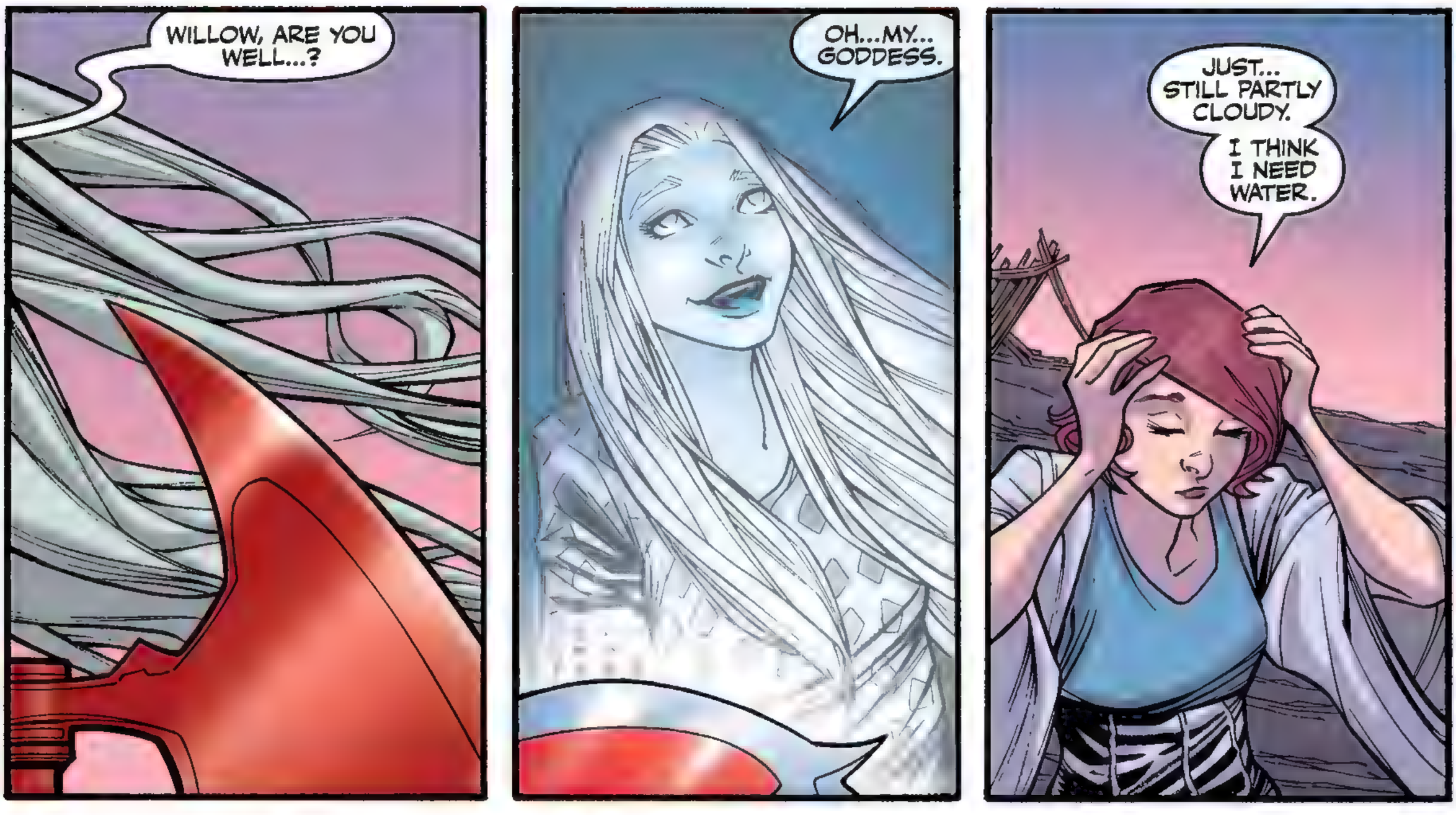
I'M NOT SURPRISED. THE *SCYTHE* MAY BE POWERFUL, BUT IT WAS FORGED FOR *WAR.*

YOU DON'T NEED IT ANYMORE.



WONDERLAND

PART FOUR



WHERE'S MY CANTEEN?

THERE'S AN ENTIRE ENCHANTED SEA BEHIND YOU.

LITTLE SALTY. WE'RE NOT ALL MERMAIDS.

DID *YOU* TAKE IT?

I DON'T KNOW. MAYBE YOU SHOULD SEARCH ME... THOROUGHLY.

ALUWYN, I'M SERIOUS. NO MORE TRICKSTER SHENANIGANS. I'M ASKING YOU TO BE ***HONEST*** WITH ME.

FINE. BUT ***I'M*** ASKING ***YOU*** NOT TO DRINK IT. IT'S BAD FOR US.

I'VE HAD IT BEFORE. IT'S NOT POISONOUS.

THAT'S NOT WHAT I SAID.

AH!

CLUNK

TOLD YOU.

MY FRIENDS--AND THE WORLD'S ALL *WRONG*-- AND I--I'M *DRINKING AND HAVING SEX* ALL DAY AND NIGHT!

ISN'T IT WONDERFUL?

NO! NO, IT'S *TERRIBLE!* I CAME HERE TO FIND A WAY TO BRING MAGIC BACK TO EARTH! MY FRIENDS-- THE WHOLE *PLANET* NEEDS ME!

HMPH. HOW DID THAT PLACE *EVER* SURVIVE BEFORE YOU CAME ALONG?

OH NO. YOU CAN'T TELL ME I'M THE GREATEST WITCH EVER TO STIR A CAULDRON AND THEN ACT LIKE IT DOESN'T COME WITH *RESPONSIBILITY.*

I'VE BEEN TELLING MYSELF THAT ENOUGH THE PAST FEW DAYS. WHILE THE PEOPLE I LOVE SUFFER.

I THOUGHT *I* WAS ONE OF THE PEOPLE YOU LOVE.

YOU KNOW YOU ARE. YOU MAKE ME FEEL...SPECIAL. POWERFUL.

AND THAT'S THE PROBLEM. I'M AFRAID I ALSO LOVE *POWER.*

THERE'S NOTHING WRONG WITH THAT. OR THERE DOESN'T HAVE TO BE. POWER IS YOUR DESTINY.

I WASN'T TRYING TO TRAP YOU, WILLOW. JUST GIVE YOU A PLACE WHERE YOU CAN BE YOU...AND IT'S ***SAFE.***

MAYBE IT'S SAFE HERE...BUT IT'S ALSO ***SELFISH.*** IT'S ONLY ABOUT ME.

I ADMIT IT. I WANTED MY POWER BACK. BUT I WANT IT FOR MY FRIENDS, TOO...FOR MY ***WORLD.***

YOU DON'T HAVE TO MAKE EXCUSES, LOVE. WE ALL UNDERSTAND YOU HERE. YOU DON'T NEED TO JUSTIFY YOURSELF.

I'M NOT.

THIS REALLY ISN'T JUST ABOUT ME.

HUH.

VERY NOBLE. BUT WE'VE ALREADY ESTABLISHED THAT YOUR PLAN ***CAN'T WORK.***

NO... THAT'S WHAT ***YOU TOLD ME.***

YOU THINK I'D *LIE?*

I THINK YOU'D *TRICK.* THAT'S WHY I CHOSE YOU AS MY GUIDE ON THE WITCH'S PATH.

BECAUSE YOU'D LEAD ME TO THE TRUTH, BUT YOU'D MAKE ME WORK TO FIND IT. AND I KNOW YOU'RE *HIDING* SOMETHING FROM ME NOW.

A GATEWAY CANNOT RESTORE MAGIC TO A WORLD THAT HAS NONE OF ITS OWN.

POWER CAN BE NURTURED FROM WITHOUT. BUT ITS ROOTS MUST BE WITHIN.

THEN WHAT I WAS AFTER DOESN'T EXIST.

WHICH MEANS I WAS FOLLOWING A *FALSE TRAIL.*

"THE DIVINATION SPELL I CAST WHEN I GOT HERE...

"...IT WAS ONLY EVER LEADING ME TO *YOU.*"

I'D BEEN SEARCHING FOR YOU FROM THE MOMENT I LOST YOU, SINCE THAT LAST CLANDESTINE CONVERSATION BEFORE THE EARTH WAS LOST, FOR ANY WAY WE COULD BE TOGETHER AGAIN.

I NEVER *STOPPED* SEARCHING.

"WHEN YOU ARRIVED IN THIS REALM, I KNEW. INSTANTLY.

"WHEN YOU CAST YOUR SPELL, TO LEAD YOU TO A FONT OF POWER... I KNEW IT WOULD FAIL.

"SO I...*ADJUSTED* IT. TO BRING YOU TO ME. TO *US*.

"*I* COULDN'T GIVE YOU WHAT YOU WANTED.

"SO I LED YOU TO WHAT YOU *NEEDED*."

WHICH IS WHAT *YOU* WANTED.

YES. I WANT YOU. I'M SORRY THAT UPSETS YOU SO.

YOU KNOW IT DOESN'T. NOT BY ITSELF.

BUT I...I CAN'T...

I KNOW.

I WAS TRYING TO RESTORE SOMETHING I'D LOST, TOO. BUT MY WAY OF DOING IT WAS AS DOOMED AS YOURS.

AS LONG AS YOU KNEW THOSE YOU LOVED SUFFERED, YOU COULD NEVER BE WITH ME...

I COULDN'T FIX THE PROBLEM. SO I TRIED YOUR SOLUTION. COVER IT UP WITH SOMETHING WONDERFUL AND BEAUTIFUL FROM SOMEWHERE ELSE.

BUT IT WAS ALL JUST...

TRICKS.

YOU MUST SAVE YOUR WORLD.

WHEN YOU HAVE, WE CAN BE TOGETHER AGAIN. TO SEE IF THAT'S THE END OF OUR QUEST...OR ANOTHER STOP ON THE ROAD.

I WILL BE THERE HOWEVER I CAN. AS A GUIDE, OR WHATEVER ELSE YOU NEED.

I NEED SOMEONE WHO CAN HELP ME. WHO'LL STAY BY MY SIDE, EVEN IF I'M DOOMED TO FAIL.

WHO WANTS THIS AS BADLY AS I DO.

I KNOW.

MARRAK.

I'M READY.

TO FIND A SOURCE OF MAGIC. TO BRING IT HOME.

SORRY I GOT... DISTRACTED.

I'M READY TO MOVE ON.

THIS WORLD DOESN'T HAVE WHAT WE NEED.

ABOUT TIME YOU FIGURED THAT OUT. BUT I THINK IT MIGHT HAVE A NEIGHBOR THAT DOES.

THE SCYTHE CAN TELL US FOR SURE.

HURRY UP. IT'S A *DIVINATION SPELL,* NOT THE SISTINE CHAPEL!

SKRRTCH

DO YOU WANT IT DONE FAST, OR DO YOU WANT IT DONE RIGHT?

I WANT YOU TO TAKE THIS *SERIOUSLY.*

LET ME REMIND YOU WHAT I GAVE UP. THEN TELL ME I DON'T TAKE IT SERIOUSLY.

WELL, YOU'RE HOLDING BACK. SO AFRAID OF YOUR DARK SIDE. THAT'S *STUPID.*

IF YOU DON'T WANT TO GET YOUR OWN HANDS DIRTY, LET ME CHANNEL SOME POWER INTO THE SCYTHE.

I SUCKED PLENTY OUT OF THE POULTRY SECTION.

DREAM BIRDS? YOU...KILLED *ALL* OF THEM?

THEY'RE PARASITES. BARELY ALIVE IN THE FIRST PLACE.

NEXT YOU'LL BE CRYING OVER... OVER LICE.

IT'S NOT THEM I'M WORRIED ABOUT. IT'S *YOU.*

I CAN FEEL THE DARK MAGIC COMING OFF YOU. IN *WAVES.*

DAMN RIGHT. WHILE YOU HUNG OUT AT THE LILITH FAIR, I'VE BEEN DOING *EVERYTHING* I COULD TO FIND A CORE OF MAGIC! TO *SAVE OUR WORLD!*

I KNOW. BUT SOMETHING ABOUT THIS IS WRONG. A *FAMILIAR* KIND OF WRONG.

THE KIND OF MAGIC YOU DON'T CONTROL. THE KIND THAT CONTROLS *YOU.*

OH, SPARE ME THE TWELVE-STEP CRAP. JUST BECAUSE *YOU* COULDN'T HANDLE THE POWER DOESN'T MEAN *NO ONE CAN!*

YOU TRADED ONE HABIT FOR ANOTHER! NOW YOU'RE ADDICTED TO *JUDGING* PEOPLE!

REMEMBER, GIRL...I'M THE ONE WHO PULLED *YOU* OUT OF THE EARTH-MOTHER CRACK HOUSE!

...

LET'S JUST GET THIS OVER WITH.

REVEAL WHAT WE SEEK. SHOW US--

ANSWERS.

SOMETHING'S OFF. IF I HAD THE ANSWERS I WOULDN'T--

I'M GLAD YOU FINALLY ADMIT IT.

IT DOESN'T MEAN YOU HAVE THEM. JUST THAT YOU'RE *RIGHT.*

THE LIMINALS.

I THINK I KNOW WHERE WE NEED TO GO. IT'S--

SAVE THE TRAVELOGUE. I'M IN.

HE'S RIGHT TO FOLLOW ME. THAT WAS THE MOST ACCURATE DIVINATION SPELL I'VE EVER DONE.

NOT BECAUSE I ASKED THE RIGHT QUESTIONS. BUT BECAUSE I WAS MORE OPEN TO THE ANSWERS.

I GOT TWO. ONE--I'LL FIND WHAT I NEED ON THIS NEXT WORLD... THE LIMINAL LANDS.

TWO--I WAS RIGHT. MARRAK CAN'T HANDLE THE POWER HE'S PLAYING WITH.

BUT I CAN.

I'M STRONGER THAN EVER. BUT THE MAGIC'S NOT CONTROLLING ME...BECAUSE I'M NOT TRYING TO CONTROL IT.

I'M LETTING IT GUIDE ME...

...TO WHAT I REALLY NEED?

THIS? *THIS* IS YOUR GRAND DESTINATION?

WHAT AM I NOT SEEING?

THIS IS WHERE THE SPELL TOOK US. WHAT WE NEED IS HERE. WE JUST HAVE TO FIGURE OUT WHERE.

YOU WENT IN BLIND? YOU LET A *SPELL* TELL YOU WHAT TO DO? *IT'S SUPPOSED TO BE THE OTHER WAY AROUND!*

WHAT DO YOU EXPECT ME TO DO NOW? COMMUNE WITH THIS WASTELAND OF A WORLD WHILE I SLOWLY *DIE OF THIRST?*

YOU CAN HAVE SOME OF THIS.

HAH. *PASS.*

OKAY. OBVIOUSLY I NEED TO TAKE MORE OF A HAND IN THINGS.

DO YOUR "ONE WITH THE UNIVERSE" BIT. I'LL SCOUT AROUND. SEE WHAT *TANGIBLE* THINGS THIS PLACE HAS TO OFFER.

I DON'T CARE WHAT MARRAK SAYS. WE CAME TO THIS PLACE FOR A REASON. AND Y'KNOW WHAT? I LIKE IT HERE.

IT'S PEACEFUL. BRIGHTER.

THERE'S SOMETHING HERE. I JUST NEED TO LET MYSELF SEE IT. PUT DOWN EVERYTHING I'M CARRYING...BODY AND MIND...

...AND FOCUS ON THE LIGHT.

NOW I SEE. IT'S NOT FLASHY, OR OBVIOUS... BUT THE MAGIC HERE IS SO **PURE.** PART OF EVERYTHING. THE SAND, THE ROCK...

GOT TO LET IT BECOME PART OF **ME.**

SHED ALL MY BURDENS. ALL MY WORLDLY CONCERNS.

JUST BECOME... THE LIGHT.

OH...WOW.

IS THIS THE ANSWER? AM I THE ANSWER?

ALUWYN SAID EARTH NEEDS AN ANCHOR. ITS OWN SOURCE OF MAGIC, BEFORE IT CAN BRING MAGIC FROM ANYWHERE ELSE.

COULD THAT SOURCE...BE **ME?**

COULD **I** BE THE NEW SEED?

AND IF I CAN... WHAT HAPPENS TO WHAT I USED TO BE?

IS THAT THE COST OF RESTORING MAGIC? THAT I LOSE **MYSELF?**

BUT I WOULDN'T. NOT REALLY. I'D BE CONNECTED TO EVERYTHING. EVERYONE I LOVE... EVERYONE I'VE **EVER** LOVED. THEY'D ALL BE PART OF--OH.

HERE I AM WORRYING ABOUT WHAT IT WOULD DO TO ME. WHEN I SHOULD WORRY WHAT IT WOULD DO TO **THEM.** TO EVERYTHING.

TO BE PART OF ME...**ALL** OF ME.

THE GOOD PARTS...AND THE BLACK-EYED AND VEINY PARTS.

LIGHT AND DARK ARE NOT SO EASILY DISENTANGLED.

GUH. THANK YOU, MEMORY WATER. AND THANK YOU, ZEN CATERPILLAR MAN.

I'M FULLY AWARE I CAN'T JUST SHED MY DARK SIDE. NO NEED TO RUB IT IN.

WILLOW.

ARE YOU BACK ALREADY? I THOUGHT I'D HAVE SOME TIME ALONE WITH--

--MYSELF.

Y-YOU'RE NOT REAL.

YOU *CAN'T* BE REAL. I'M RIGHT HERE.

THERE CAN'T BE TWO OF YOU?

NO!

I'VE GOT ENOUGH PROBLEMS JUST KEEPING YOU LOCKED AWAY! SO IF THIS IS SOME KIND OF...OF "DARK SIDE TAKING ON A LIFE OF ITS OWN" THING...

...WELL, YOU CAN JUST *FORGET* IT! THERE IS ONLY *ONE WILLOW!*

WELL, *DUH.*

TH-THAT'S *TRUE*, ISN'T IT?

THAT'S BEEN MY MISTAKE. ACTING LIKE YOU'RE A SEPARATE PERSON. SOMETHING I CAN CLOSE OFF, OR RUN AWAY FROM.

WHEN REALLY... THERE'S NO LIGHT WILLOW. AND NO DARK WILLOW.

THERE'S JUST WILLOW.

HEY! *WAIT!* I STILL HAVE QUESTIONS!

ARE YOU GONE FOREVER? WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

WHY DO I SOUND LIKE THE DOUBLE RAINBOW GUY?

TALKING TO YOURSELF?

MOSTLY TALKING *AT* MYSELF.

CAN YOU FEEL THE DIFFERENCE IN THE MAGIC HERE?

IT'S LESS EXPLOSIVE... MORE INTERNAL, EASIER TO WORK WITH. MUCH MORE...

BORING.

IT'S FINE AS A MEANS TO AN END. BUT WE'RE AFTER STRONGER STUFF.

I FIGURED OUT WHY WE'RE HERE. "LIMINAL" MEANS ON A *BOUNDARY.* THIS DIMENSION IS A PATHWAY TO ANOTHER. ONE WHERE MAGIC EXISTS IN ITS *PUREST* FORM.

THE POWER. IT'S WHAT WE CHASE EVERY TIME WE CAST A SPELL. A WHOLE *WORLD* FULL OF IT.

I'M GONNA STICK MY HANDS IN UP TO THE ELBOWS. GORGE MYSELF ON MAGIC AND BRING IT BACK HOME.

AND LUCKY YOU...YOU GET TO RIDE SHOTGUN.

SLOW DOWN. I WANT TO--

I KNOW WHAT YOU WANT. HERE, HAVE A TASTE...I CAN CHANNEL SOME.

HEY! YOU-- THAT--FEELS FAMILIAR.

SURE. IT'S THE DRAGON WE ALL CHASE. MAGIC *MAINLINED.* I CAN GET US THERE...GET US ALL WE NEED...BUT I'M GONNA NEED *YOUR HELP.*

YOU'VE GOT TO GIVE A LITTLE TO GET A LITTLE.

W-WHAT?

GRAH!

ZARK

GODDESS! I CAN'T BELIEVE I DIDN'T SEE IT!

IT'S BEEN ON MY MIND MORE THE PAST FEW DAYS THAN IN *YEARS,* BUT WITH ALL THE MEMORY WATER AND STUFF I DIDN'T EVEN ASK WHY.

WHY MY HEAD WAS GIVING ME *THOSE* MEMORIES.

YOU TOLD ME OUTRIGHT YOU WERE FROM EARTH. SAID A DARK SPELL CHANGED YOU. DIDN'T MENTION WHO CAST IT.

BECAUSE IT WAS *YOU.*

TOOK YOU LONG ENOUGH...

...STRAWBERRY.

DON'T CALL ME THAT!

YOU, PATHETIC, DISGUSTING--

RRRMMMM

--JUNKIE!

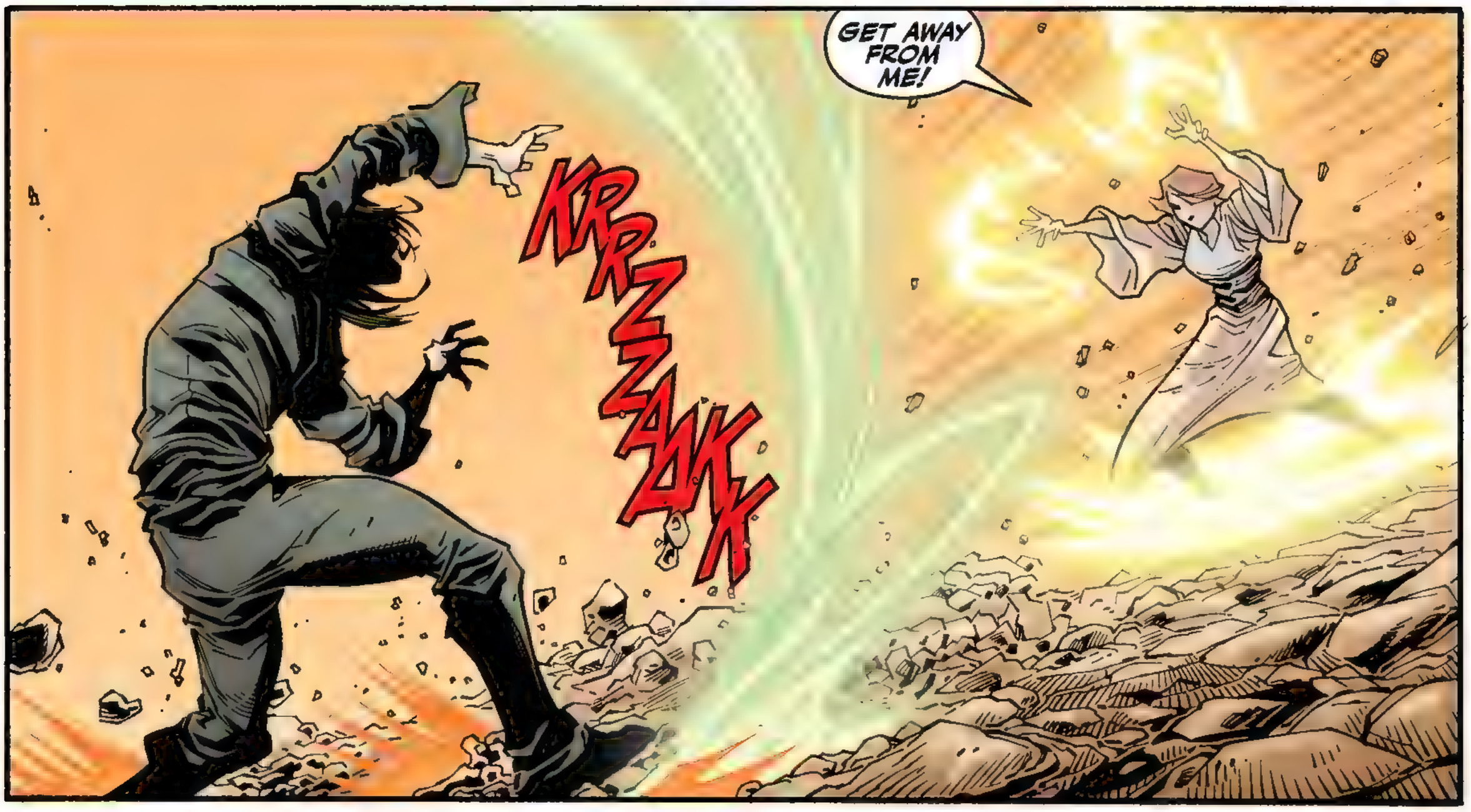
TAKES ONE TO KNOW ONE, KIDDO.

FROM WHERE I'M STANDING, LOOKS LIKE THE STUDENT'S BECOME THE TEACHER.

RACK. I THOUGHT I...

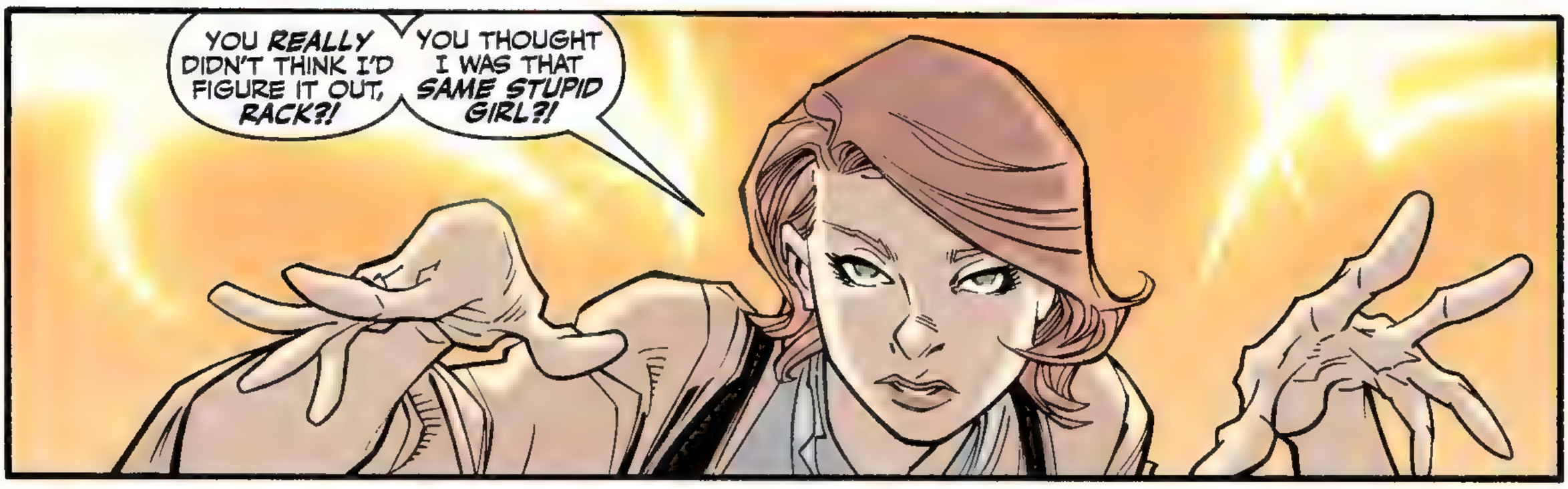
KILLED ME? PRETTY CLOSE. DRAINED ME OF EVERY SHRED OF MAGIC I HAD. HERE...

LET ME SHOW YOU HOW IT FEELS!



WONDERLAND

PART FIVE



"...YOUR FIRST."

YOU HAVE POWER, GIRL.

COMING OFF YOU IN WAVES.

I-I CAN DO STUFF... BUT I GET TAPPED OUT QUICK, AND I'VE USED PRACTICALLY EVERY SPELL I KNOW.

YOU'VE GOTTA GIVE A LITTLE TO GET A LITTLE, RIGHT?

YOU TASTE...LIKE STRAWBERRIES.

WHADDAYA THINK, STRAWBERRY?

CAN YOU HANDLE SOME MORE?

HATE TO BRUISE YOUR EGO, RACK, BUT YEAH... I *DID* FORGET YOU. YOU WERE JUST MY FIRST DEALER.

YOU DIDN'T INTRODUCE ME TO MAGIC--OR ***ABUSING*** IT. I WAS ALREADY ON THAT ROAD.

YOU JUST SAW AN OPPORTUNITY. BECAUSE YOU'RE A ***LEECH.***

A LEECH I THOUGHT I ***SQUASHED.***

WHEN YOU WENT DARK? YOU PRETTY NEAR *DID*, GIRL. I SPENT A MONTH IN A COMA.

BEST TRIP OF MY LIFE.

BUT I KNEW WE'D SEE EACH OTHER AGAIN, STRAWBERRY.

SAY WHAT YOU WANT. YOU ***NEED*** ME. YOU'VE ***ALWAYS*** NEEDED ME.

OH, COME ON. YOU REALLY THINK IT'S COINCIDENCE? OUT OF ALL THE ENDLESS WORLDS IN ALL THE ENDLESS DIMENSIONS, YOU FOUND YOUR WAY BACK TO ***ME...***

...WHEN YOU MOST NEEDED A ***FIX.***

HA! STILL SO EASY TO RATTLE.

NO! YOU CAN'T--

USE IT AS WELL AS YOU? NO...

BUT I CAN USE IT *WELL* ENOUGH.

SHRAAS

GODDESS.

AHH.

CAN YOU *FEEL* THE *POWER?*

I...I CAN.

TZZ MM

AND I'M NOT LETTING YOU *ANYWHERE* NEAR IT.

HEH.

WASN'T *ASKING.*

MAGIC DUEL?

WITH *ME?*

YOU'RE *DEFINITELY* HIGH.

GOOD.

NOW WE'RE HAVING A *CONVERSATION.*

ALL YOU DO IS USE AND *DESTROY!* YOU'RE THE *OPPOSITE* OF WHAT MAGIC SHOULD BE!

WHAT'S THAT? PONIES AND RAINBOWS? NO...IT'S WHATEVER *WILLOW* WANTS.

I MAY BE SCUM. LET'S FACE IT, I AM.

BUT YOU'RE A *BRAT.*

YOU WANT WHAT YOU WANT WHEN YOU WANT IT, AND IF YOU DON'T GET IT PEOPLE *SUFFER.*

AND THE RULES APPLY TO *EVERYONE BUT YOU.*

YOU WANNA CALL *P.E.T.A.* WHEN I KILL A MONSTER. BUT WHEN ANOTHER ONE'S ABOUT TO MESS UP YOUR PRECIOUS QUEST, *BOOM!* IT'S *GIBLETS.*

YOU SPEND YOUR LIFE GUARDING A HELLMOUTH. BUT WHEN YOU LOSE YOUR POWER, YOU DECIDE TO MAKE A *NEW* HELLMOUTH TO GET IT BACK, AND *DAMN* THE CONSEQUENCES!

AND THAT *QUEST* OF YOURS...IT'S THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IN HISTORY. TILL YOU RUN INTO A COVEN OF HORNY WITCHES WHO WORSHIP YOU AND KEEP YOU JUICED.

ALL OF A SUDDEN, SCREW EARTH! *PROBLEM SOLVED!*

FORGET.

TASTE.

ENJOY.

FEEL.

YOU THINK I DON'T *KNOW* ALL THAT?

WILLOW, NO! *PLEASE!*

WE LOVE YOU...

I'VE BEEN WEAK AND SELFISH. LEFT MY FRIENDS 'CAUSE I WANTED *POWER* MORE THAN THEM.

BUT I'M *BETTER.* I DIDN'T JUST USE ANGEL-- I FORGAVE HIM. THAT HELPED ME CONTROL MY DARK SIDE--

SO INSPIRING. CAN'T WAIT FOR THE SELF-HELP BOOK.

I'M TRYING TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM OF *BRINGING MAGIC BACK TO EARTH!* REMEMBER THAT ONE? IF YOU DO, IT'S 'CAUSE OF *ME!*

WITHOUT ME YOU'D STILL BE NODDING IN A MOTHER-GODDESS SHOOTING GALLERY. YOU SHOULD *THANK* ME FOR THE CHANCE TO TAP SOME *REAL* POWER!

HERE...

KRAK ATOOM

HAVE A TASTE!

THAT...

...WAS A MISTAKE.

REAL POWER ISN'T SOMETHING YOU STEAL.

IT'S SOMETHING YOU *EARN.* AND ONCE YOU DO...

...IT COMES TO YOU FROM *EVERYWHERE.*

YOU TRIED EVERYTHING TO MAKE ME GO DARK. AND IT DIDN'T WORK.

TOLD YOU I WASN'T THE SAME GIRL.

THEN WHY ARE YOUR EYES BLACK?

W-WHAT...?

HA!

STILL YOUR OWN WORST ENEMY.

YOU--!

VZOOP

I'M GOING *HOME*, KIDDO. BACK TO EARTH. BRINGING MAGIC WITH ME. ON *MY* TERMS. IN *MY* CONTROL.

THAT'S WHAT *YOU* WANT, TOO. WHY FIGHT IT?

I'M NOT. I'M FIGHTING *YOU.*

WELL, KNOCK YOURSELF OUT. 'CAUSE THAT'S JUST GONNA GET TO THE TRUTH.

THE *REAL* YOU.

N-NO.

IT'S *ALL* THE REAL ME.

AND I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TRYING TO DO. WHY YOU NEED ME.

YOU WANT THE POWER TO TEAR THIS PLACE UP? FIND A WELLSPRING OF MAGIC? GET IT SOMEWHERE ELSE.

I'M DONE FEEDING YOUR HABIT.

HEY!

DAMN IT, *GET BACK HERE!*

YOU PRISSY LITTLE *PRINCESS!*

I'M TRYING TO GIVE YOU WHAT YOU WANT! *WHAT OUR WORLD NEEDS!*

BY DESTROYING *THIS* WORLD?

YOU HEARD THE DAMN CATERPILLAR! ENERGY COMES FROM *OPPOSING FORCES!* DARK AND LIGHT! YOU AND ME! WORKING *TOGETHER!*

IF YOU'RE TOO DAMN SOFT TO DO WHAT'S GOTTA BE DONE, FINE. WE'RE HERE. I DON'T NEED YOU *OR* THE SCYTHE ANY-MORE.

BUT I'M GONNA GIVE YOU A LITTLE PAYBACK FOR THE LAST TIME WE SAW EACH OTHER.

DRAIN THE *POWER* OUT OF YOU JUST AHEAD OF THE *LIFE.*

GUESS THERE'S NO REASON THE OPPOSING FORCES CAN'T BE IN THE *SAME PLACE.*

RACK
RACK
RACK
RACK
HNH?
AUDITORY ILLUSIONS?
YOU'LL NEED TO DO BETTER THAN THAT, STRAWBERRY.
THAT... WASN'T ME.
OH.
RACK
RACK
RACK
RACK
RACK
RACK

YOU *HAVE* TO HELP ME!

THERE'S TOO MANY FOR EITHER ONE OF US *ALONE!*

THEY'LL COME FOR YOU NEXT!

I-I'M TRYING...

I--

WILLOW

WILLOW

WILLOW

WILLOW

OH BOY.

WILLOW

DO NOT BE AFRAID.

WHAT ARE YOU *DOING* TO HIM?

A BODY HAS DEFENSES. TO REMOVE INVADERS THAT WOULD CAUSE IT HARM.

AND... AM I--

YOU ARE AN INVADER.

BUT YOU HAVE CAUSED NO HARM.

I TRY TO BE A GOOD GUEST.

YOU SAID "A BODY." ARE YOU, LIKE, THE *EMBODIMENT OF MAGIC?*

MAGIC IS A FUNDAMENTAL FORCE. IT CANNOT BE CONTAINED IN ONE BODY. EVEN ONE THE SIZE OF A UNIVERSE.

BUT I SUPPOSE I AM AN *EMBODIMENT.*

OF WHAT?

OF MYSELF.

SO THIS IS THE DIMENSION *FORTUNE-COOKIE SLOGANS* COME FROM.

I SENSE YOUR FRUSTRATION. I EXPLAIN AS BEST I CAN. BUT SOME THINGS ARE COMPLEX.

ALL BEINGS ARE COMPLEX.

LIKE YOU.

OH... WOW.

IT'S-- IT'S--

BEAUTIFUL. YES.

NOT *DESPITE* THE IMPERFECTIONS, BUT BECAUSE OF THEM. THE WAY THEY SHAPE THE WHOLE.

BECAUSE YOU HAVE STOPPED FIGHTING THEM...AND BEGUN *LEARNING* FROM THEM.

RACK WAS RIGHT. OPPOSING FORCES *CAN* EXIST IN THE SAME PLACE.

THEY *MUST.*

THEN YOU *UNDERSTAND.* THE PHYSICAL, THE SPIRITUAL...THEY *NEED* EACH OTHER.

THAT'S WHY I HAVE TO BRING MAGIC BACK TO EARTH. I MEAN, YES, I WANT IT, BUT EARTH *NEEDS* IT. PLEASE, IF YOU'LL HELP ME I'LL DO *ANYTHING--*

WHAT YOU WANT CANNOT BE.

NO GATEWAY COULD CARRY ENOUGH MAGIC TO FILL YOUR WORLD, OR RESTORE ALL THAT HAS BEEN LOST.

THAT MUST COME FROM WITHIN.

FROM THE *HEART.*

OH...MY... GODDESS...

BUT THE SEED OF MAGIC WAS *DESTROYED!*

EARTH DOESN'T *HAVE* A HEART ANY-MORE!

BUT YOU DO.

WH-WHAT...

THAT FEELS...LIKE... SOMETHING FILLING ME. NOT POWER...NOT SOMETHING THAT JUST WANTS MORE...

BUT SOMETHING THAT'S ALWAYS BEEN THERE. JUST OUT OF REACH.

WHAT *IS* THIS?

A GIFT. ONE YOU ARE FINALLY READY TO RECEIVE.

THERE IS STILL MAGIC IN YOUR WORLD...BUT WITHOUT THE SEED, IT ONLY EXISTS WHERE IT IS INHERENT. PART OF THE ***ESSENCE*** OF A BEING.

GIVEN ONLY TO YOU...BUT NOT ONLY *FOR* YOU. BEFORE NOW, COULD YOU HAVE APPRECIATED THE DISTINCTION?

RACK BROUGHT YOU TO THE TRUTH. THERE IS NO DARK WILLOW OR LIGHT WILLOW. NO DARK MAGIC OR LIGHT MAGIC. ONLY DARK ***INTENT*** AND ***ACTION.***

FOR GOOD OR ILL, RACK HAS BEEN A TEACHER FOR YOU. AT FIRST, YOU LEARNED THE WRONG LESSON. NOW YOU HAVE LEARNED THE RIGHT ONE...

...AND YOU DO NOT NEED HIM ANY-MORE.

TURN AROUND.

HOME.

BUT I STILL DON'T--

WAIT.

YOU WILL STILL HAVE NEED FOR THIS.

AT TIMES, ONLY SEPARATION CAN BRING ABOUT UNITY... AND WE MUST BE DESTROYED TO BE MADE WHOLE.

MY CANTEEN. IT HAD SOME REALLY POWERFUL... WATER IN IT.

YOU DO NOT NEED THAT ANY LONGER. AS YOU HAVE LEARNED... TRUE POWER LIES ELSEWHERE.

SAN FRANCISCO! SCOOBIES! I MISSED MY SCOOBIES...

YOU *MISSED* THEM WHILE STILL AMONG THEM.

WILL THAT REMAIN A PROBLEM?

...

NO.

THEN THE POWER YOU SOUGHT *IS* WITHIN YOU.

BUT I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO WITH IT.

NO?

NOW YOU CAN FIND OUT.

HEY! WATCH IT!

YOU COULD GET HURT, COMIN' OUTTA NOWHERE LIKE THAT.

SORRY.

BUT IT'S NOT ABOUT WHERE I CAME FROM.

IT'S ABOUT WHERE I'M GOING.

STORY OF MY LIFE. MY GRAND QUEST IS OVER, AND I DON'T KNOW IF I SUCCEEDED OR FAILED.

I DIDN'T RESTORE MAGIC TO EARTH. BUT I RESTORED MAGIC TO **ME**...AND ME TO EARTH.

RACK WOULD'VE HOARDED IT...REVELED IN IT. LIKE UNCLE SCROOGE IN HIS MONEY PIT. WHO AM I KIDDING? THAT'S WHAT I WOULD'VE DONE.

BUT NOT ANYMORE. BEING THE ONLY ONE WITH MAGIC...MAKES ME WANT TO **SHARE** IT.

I CAN STILL GIVE MAGIC BACK TO THE WORLD. KINDA.

IT'S JUST GONNA HAVE TO BE MORE UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL.

I HOPE THAT'S GOOD ENOUGH.

Buffy the Vampire Slayer™

SEASON 9 SKETCHBOOK AND COVER GALLERY

Featuring art by GEORGES JEANTY *with*

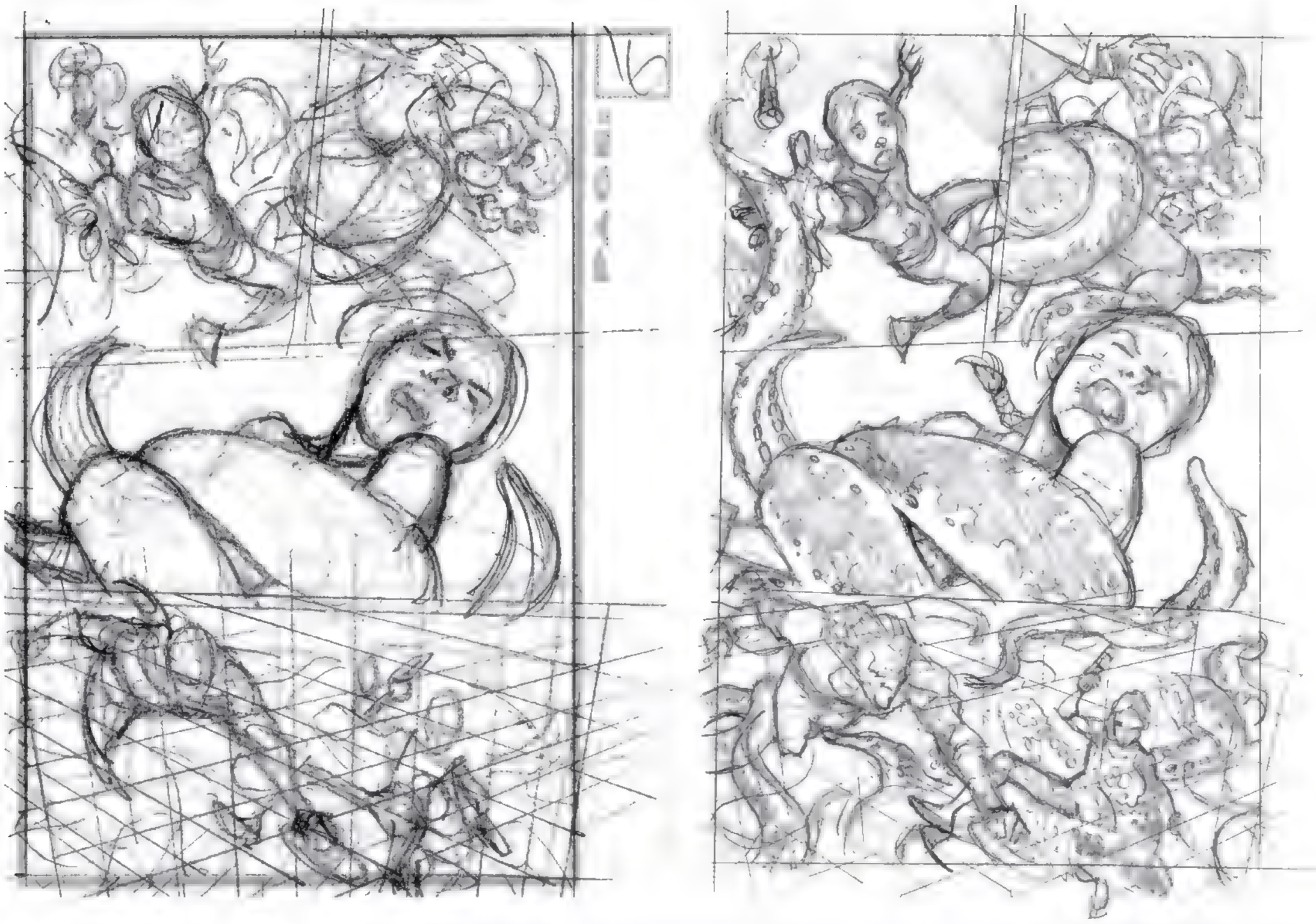
JO CHEN BRIAN CHING JENNY FRISON MEGAN LEVENS MICHELLE MADSEN
PHIL NOTO KARL MOLINE DEXTER VINES

Above and opposite: Likeness tryouts for Willow, Spike, Dawn, and Buffy by artist Phil Noto, our cover artist for the majority of *Buffy* Season 9.

noto

Sketch, rough pencils, and final pencils for the *Buffy* Season 9 #11 variant cover by Georges. We had intended to have this montage cover inked, but when we saw how gorgeous the final pencils were, we decided to apply colors over the pencils.

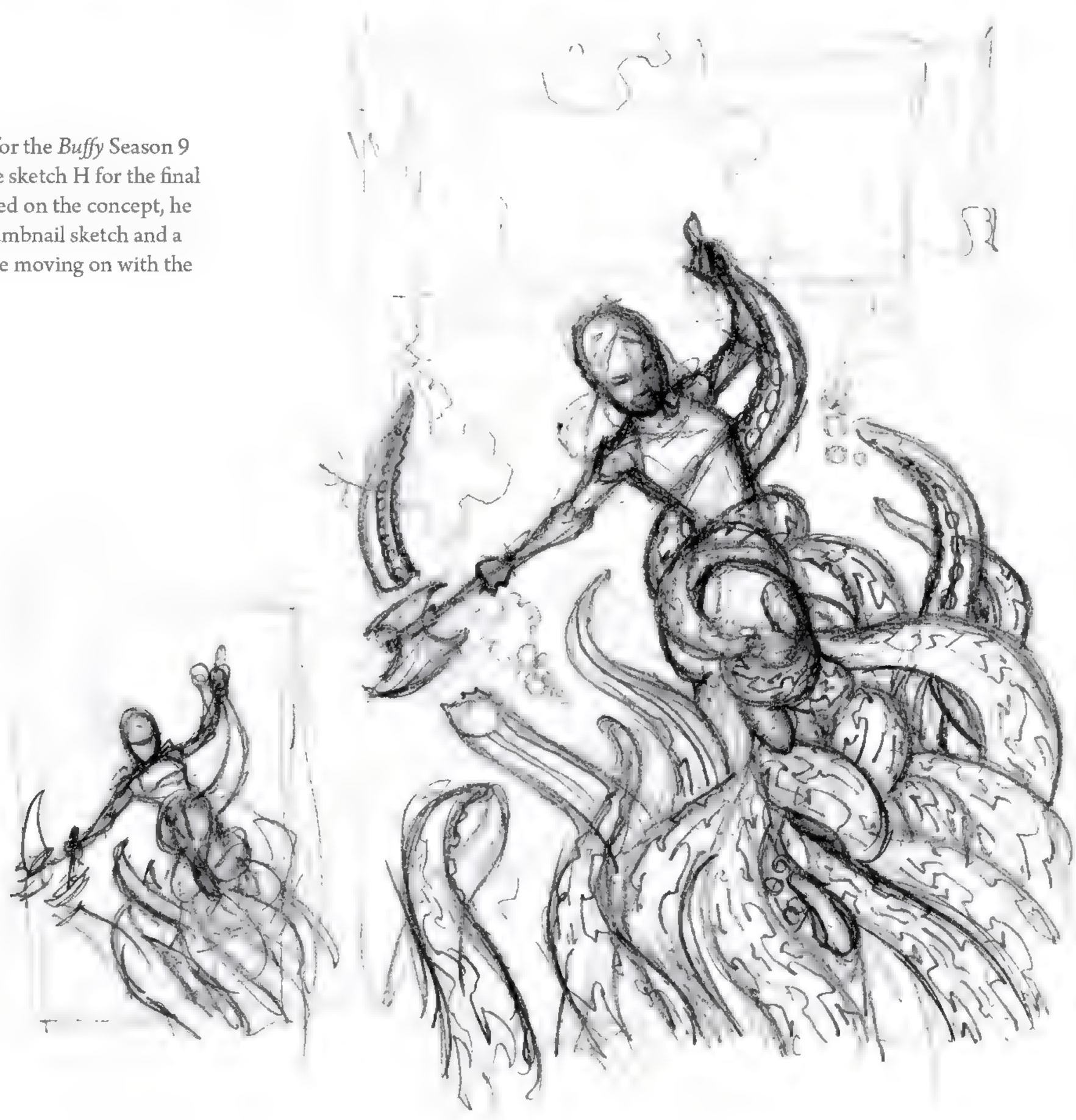
Opposite: Buffy Season 9 #11 final variant cover art. Pencils by Georges Jeanty and colors by Michelle Madsen.



Thumbnail layout, rough pencils, and final pencils for *Buffy* Season 9 #12, page 16. Pencils by Georges Jeanty.

Final inks for issue #12, page 16. Inks by Nathan Massengill.

Initial thumbnail sketches for the *Buffy* Season 9 #12 variant cover. We chose sketch H for the final cover, but as Georges worked on the concept, he surprised us with a new thumbnail sketch and a slightly tighter sketch before moving on with the final pencils.

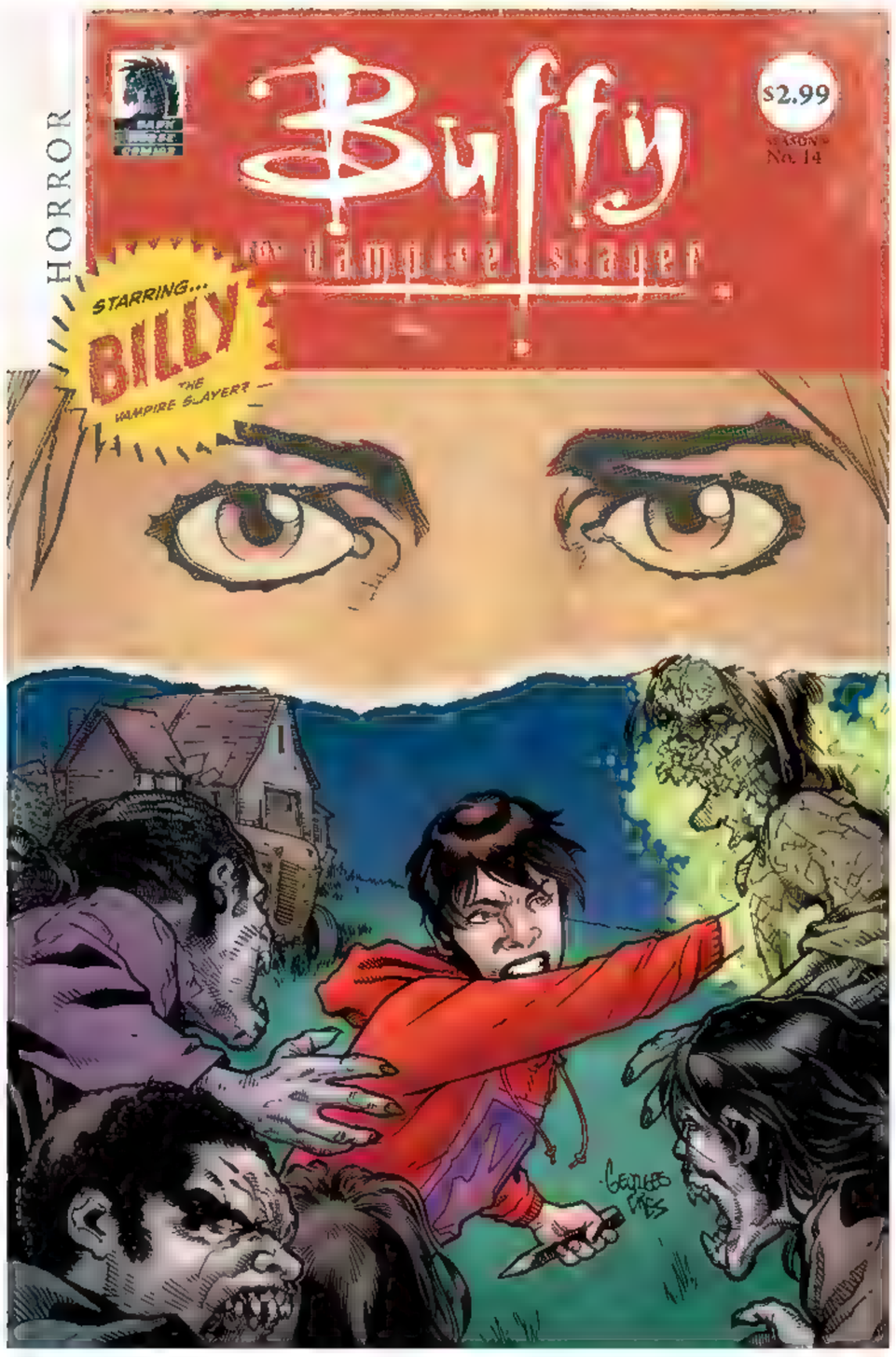


Buffy Season 9 #12 final variant cover art. Pencils by Georges Jeanty, inks by Dexter Vines, and colors by Michelle Madsen.

Final inks for *Buffy* Season 9 #13 variant cover art.

Opposite: Buffy Season 9 #13 final variant cover art. Pencils and inks by Georges Jeanty and colors by Michelle Madsen.

BORGES.



Above: The *Buffy* Season 9 #14 suggested design treatment, but we opted for the image on the opposite page to get more art at the top. Design by Justin Couch.

Right, above: Rough pencils for the *Buffy* Season 9 #14 variant cover.

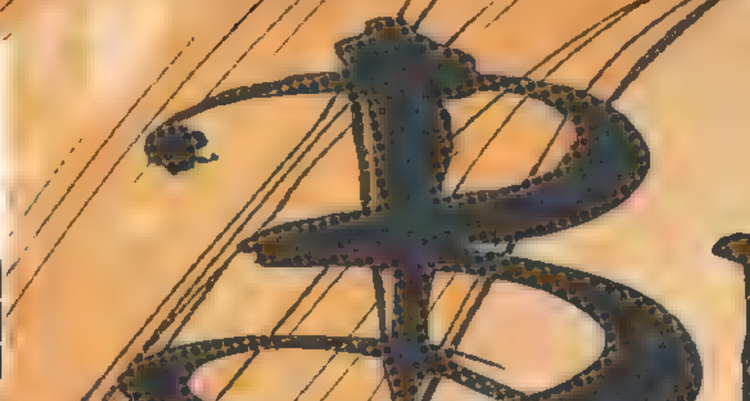
Right, below: Final variant cover art for *Buffy* Season 9 #14.

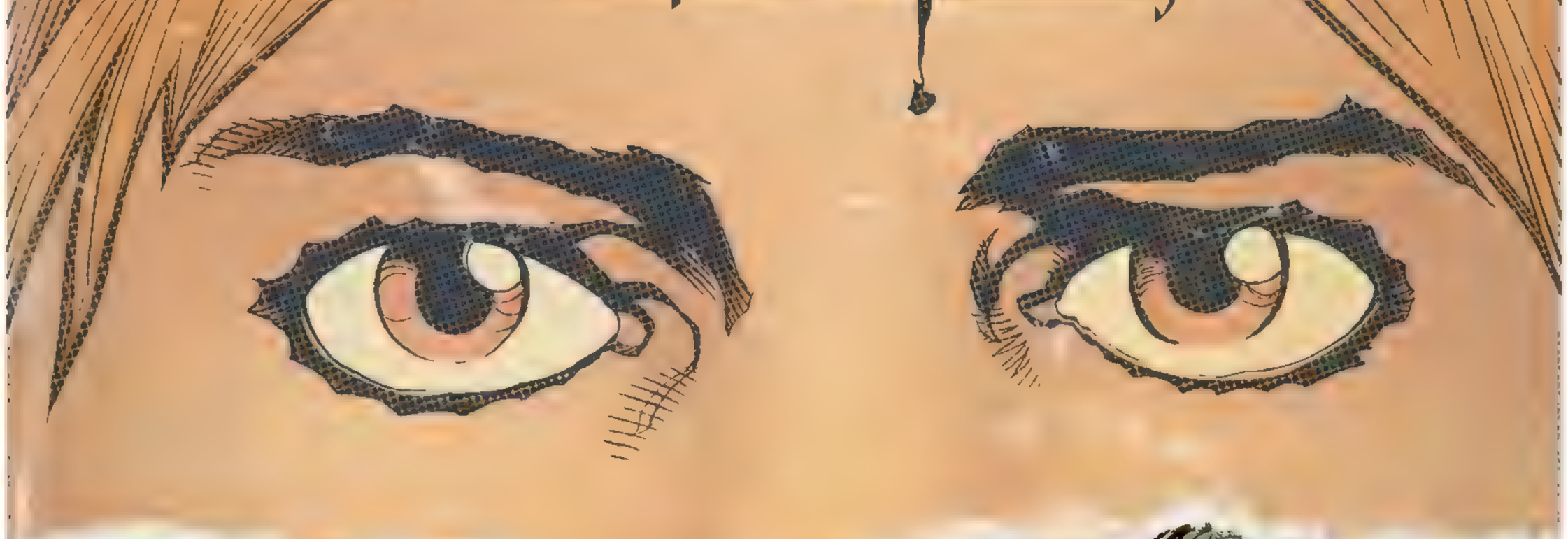
Opposite: Buffy Season 9 #14 final variant cover art with trade dress. Pencils by Georges Jeanty, inks by Dexter Vines, colors by Michelle Madsen, and design by Justin Couch.

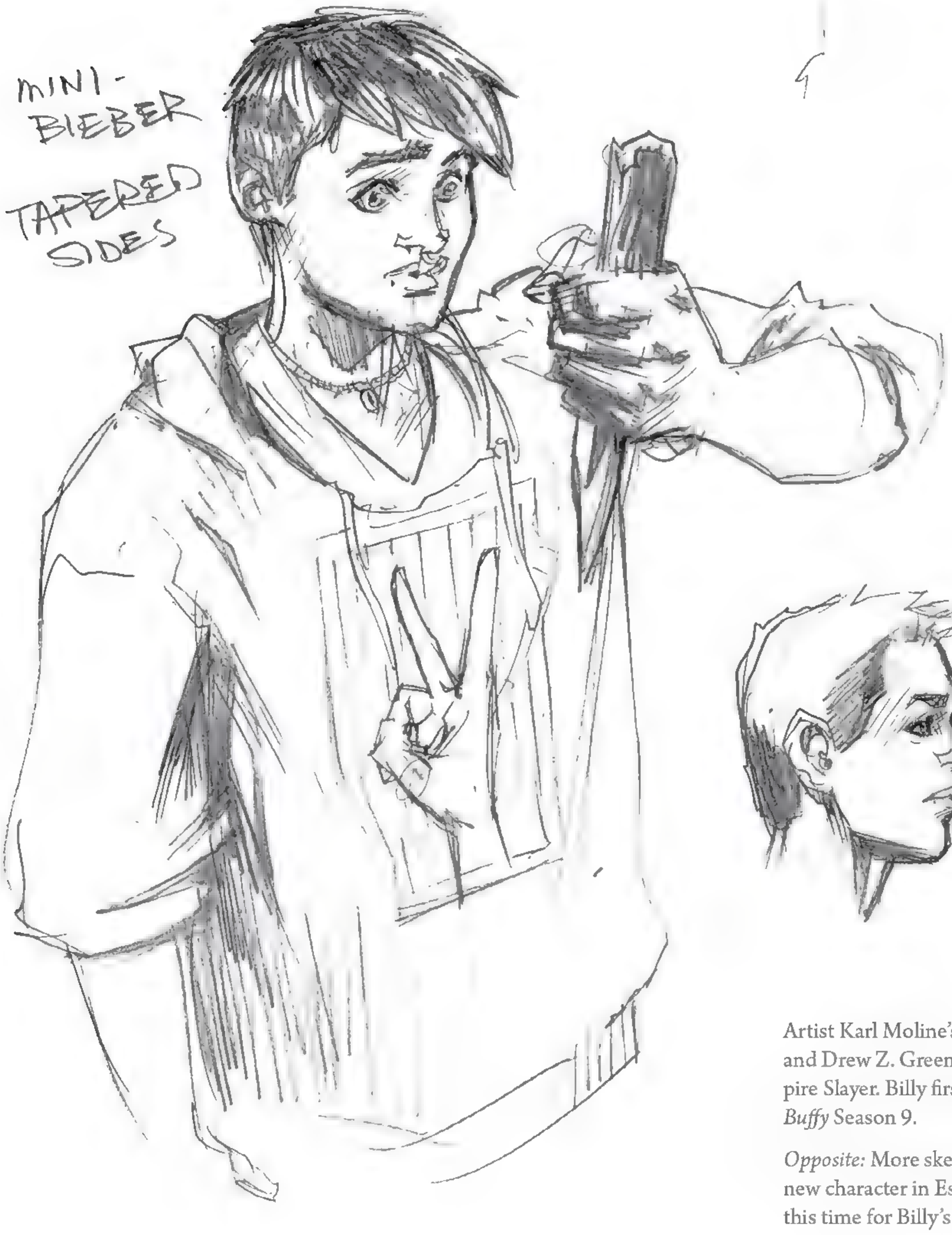
DARK HORSE COMICS

SEASON 9
No. 14 $2.99

Buffy the Vampire Slayer™







Artist Karl Moline's initial sketches for Jane Espenson and Drew Z. Greenberg's new character, Billy the Vampire Slayer. Billy first appeared in issues #14 and #15 of *Buffy* Season 9.

Opposite: More sketches from Karl Moline for another new character in Espenson and Greenberg's story line, this time for Billy's love interest, Devon.

A

B

C

D

SORRY, I THOUGHT YOUNG TRAVOLTA WOULD WORK

E

F

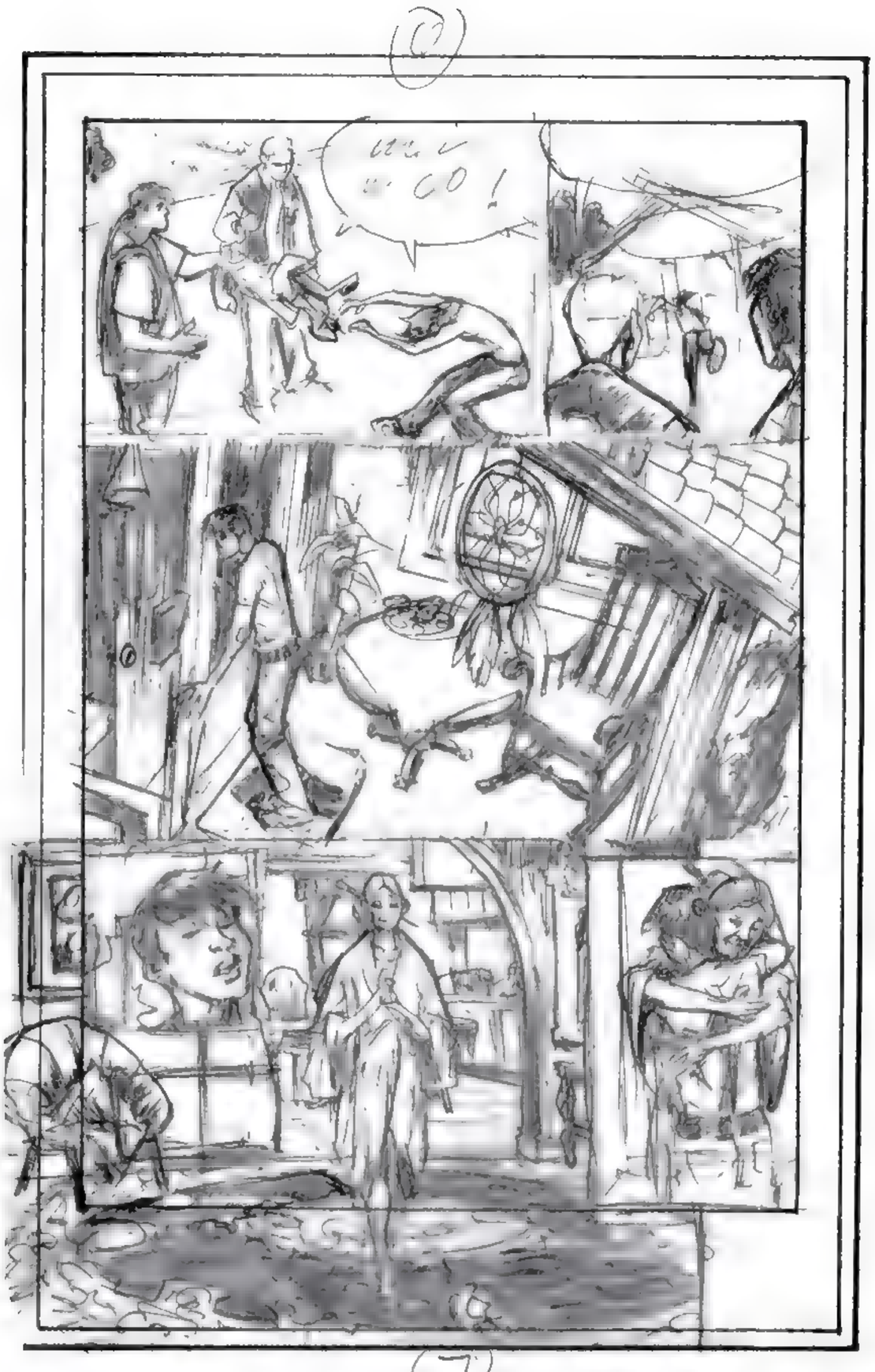
G

H

LIGHT EYES
LONGER FACE
THINNER LIDS
SIDEBURNS

FASHIONABLE LEATHER JACKET

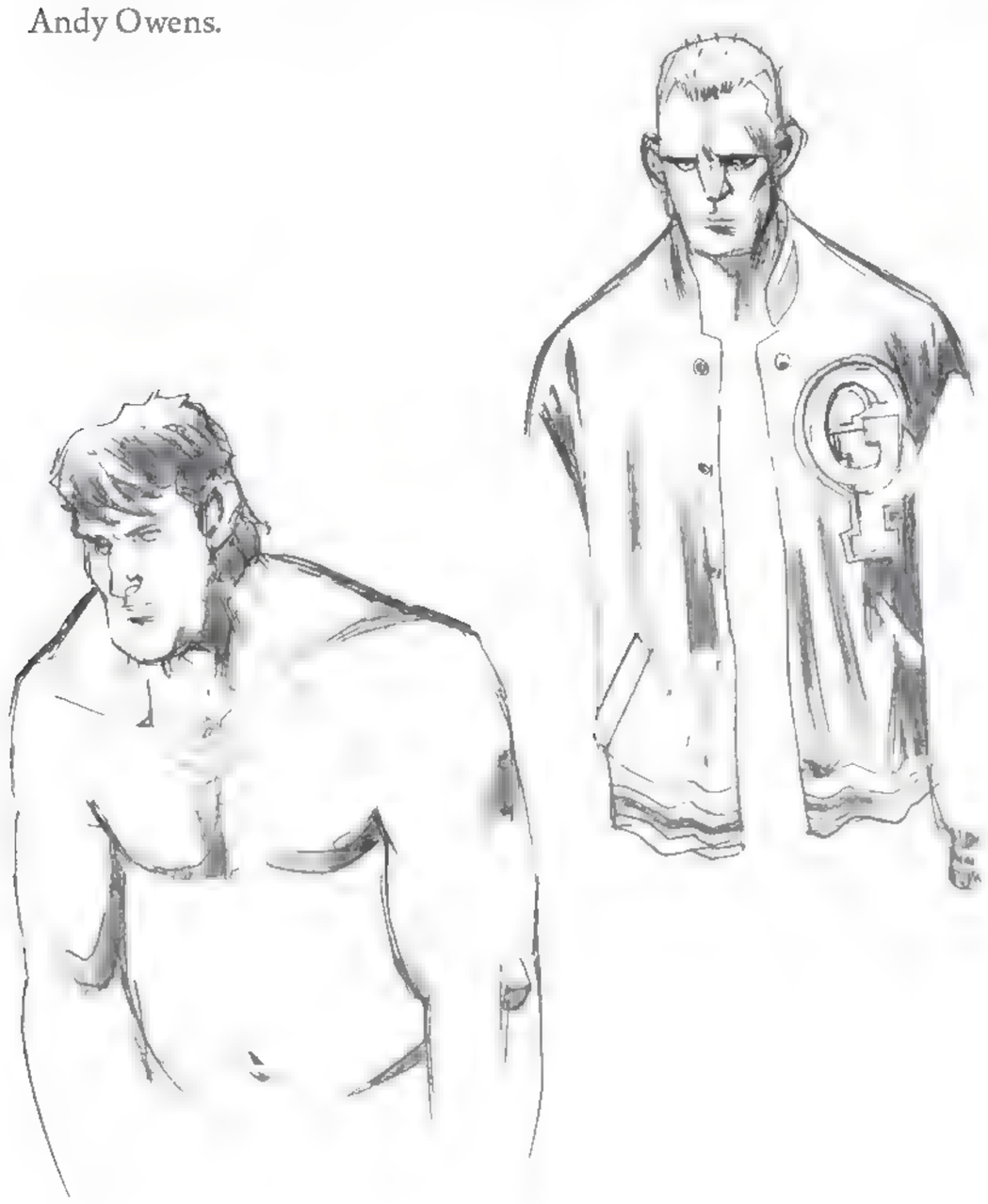
CLEAN LINE SLACKS

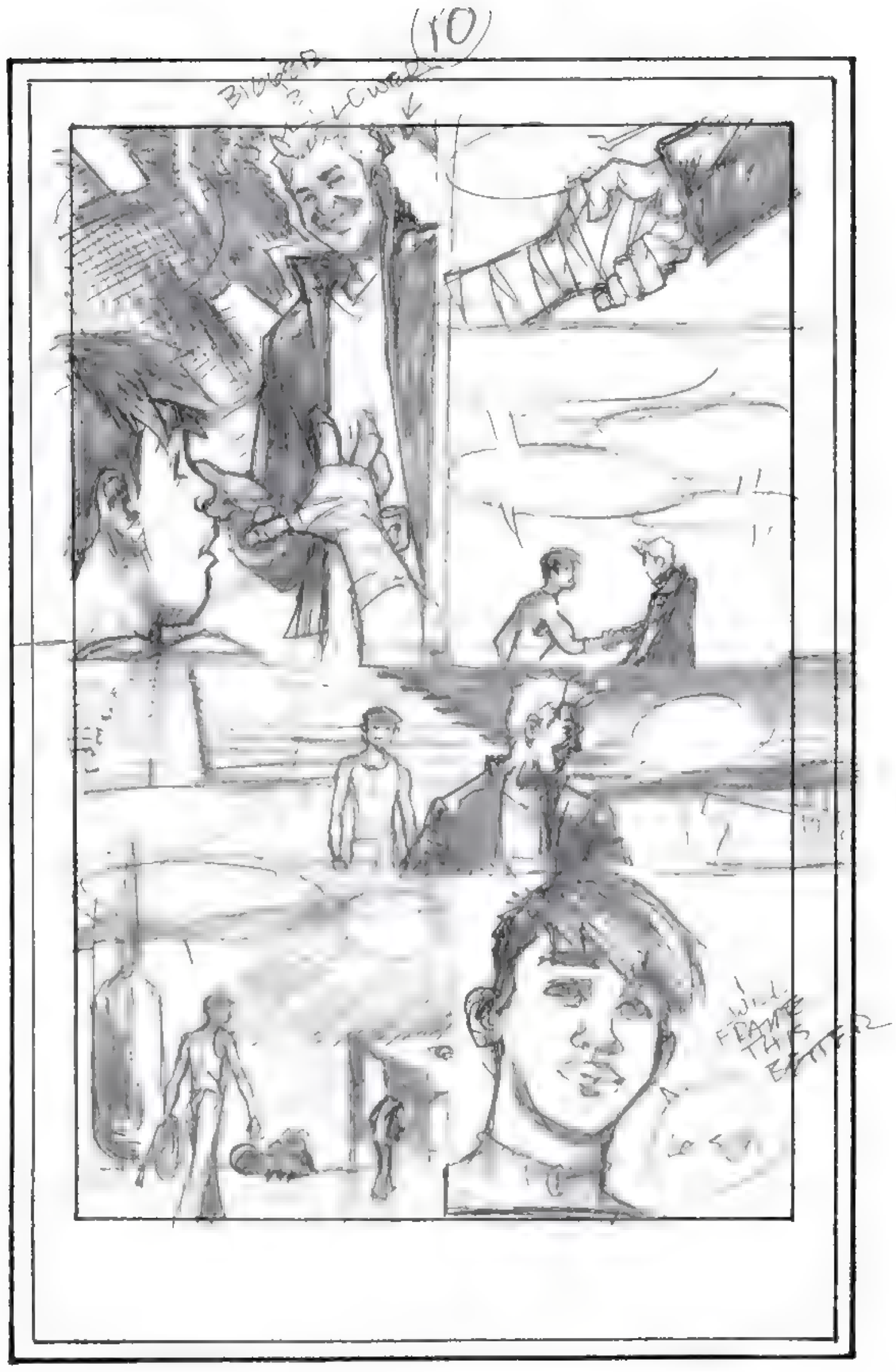


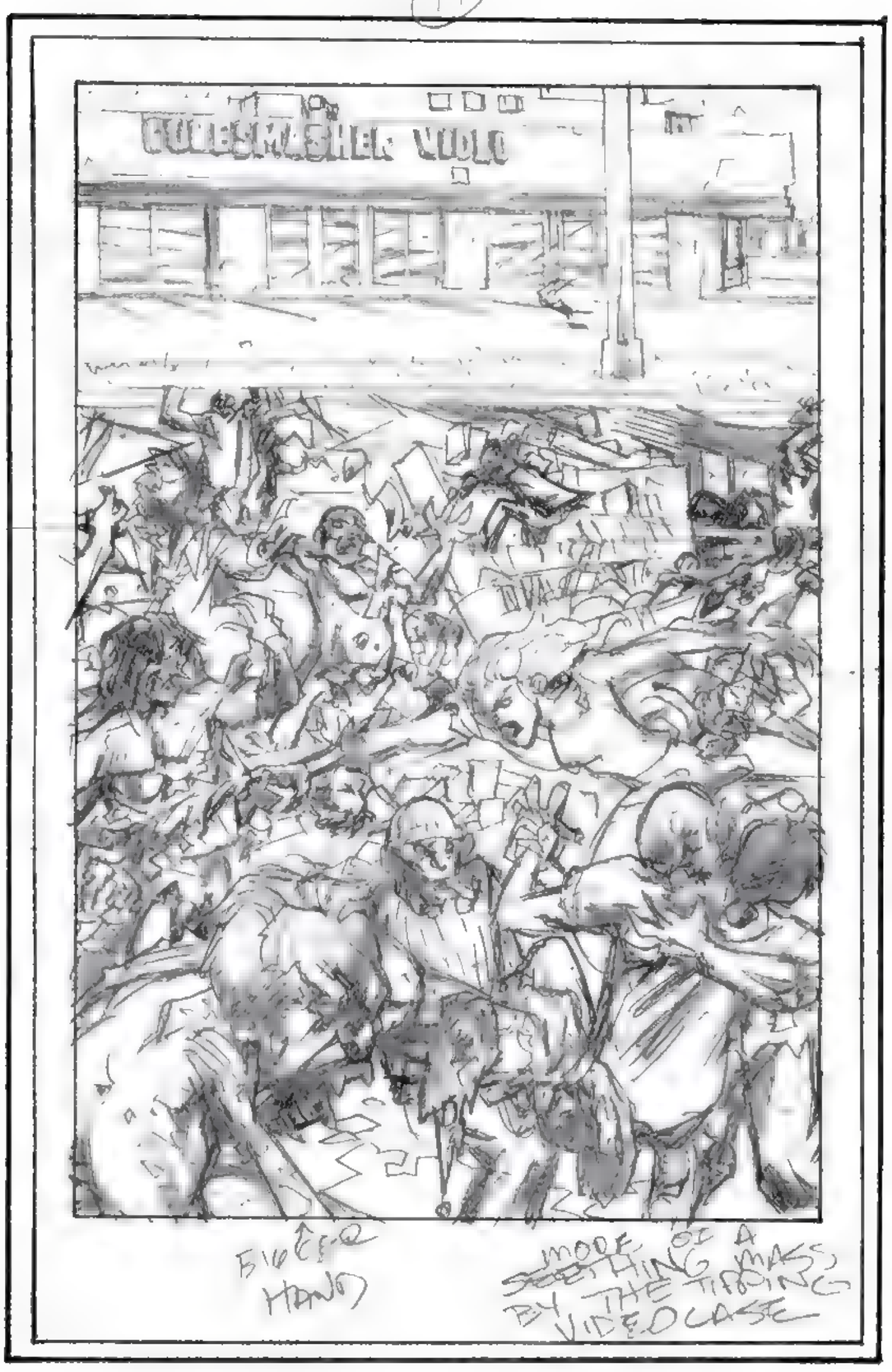
Pencils and final inks for *Buffy* Season 9 #14, pages 6 and 7. Pencils by Karl Moline and inks by Andy Owens.

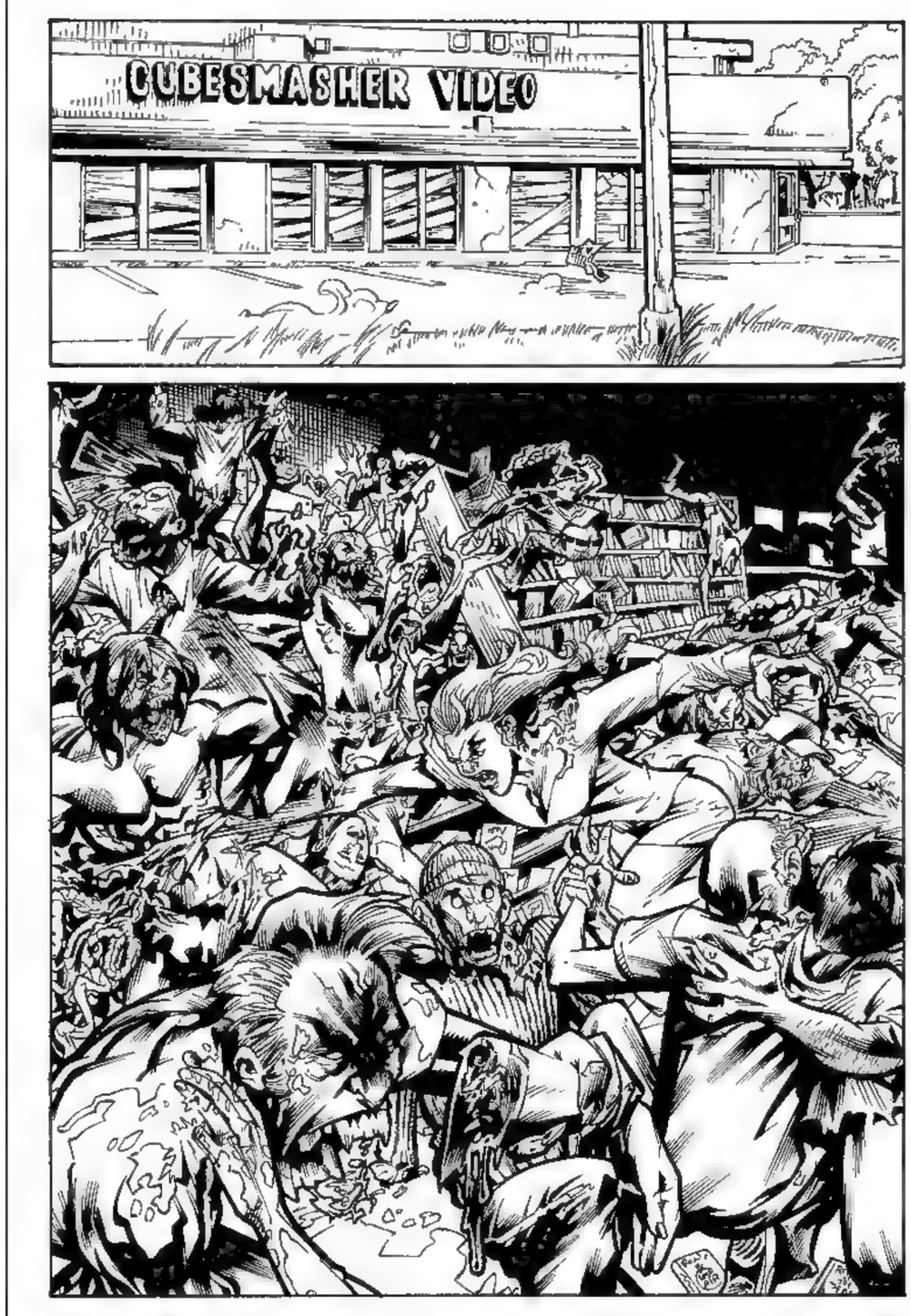
Top left: Initial character designs for two of Billy's tormentors, Post and Garron, who fall early to the zompire plague.

Right and bottom: Pencils for Buffy Season 9 #14, pages 10 and 11, with final inks for page 11. Pencils by Karl Moline and inks by Andy Owens.









Rough layout detailing perspective lines; final pencils; and inks for *Buffy* Season 9 #15 variant cover art.

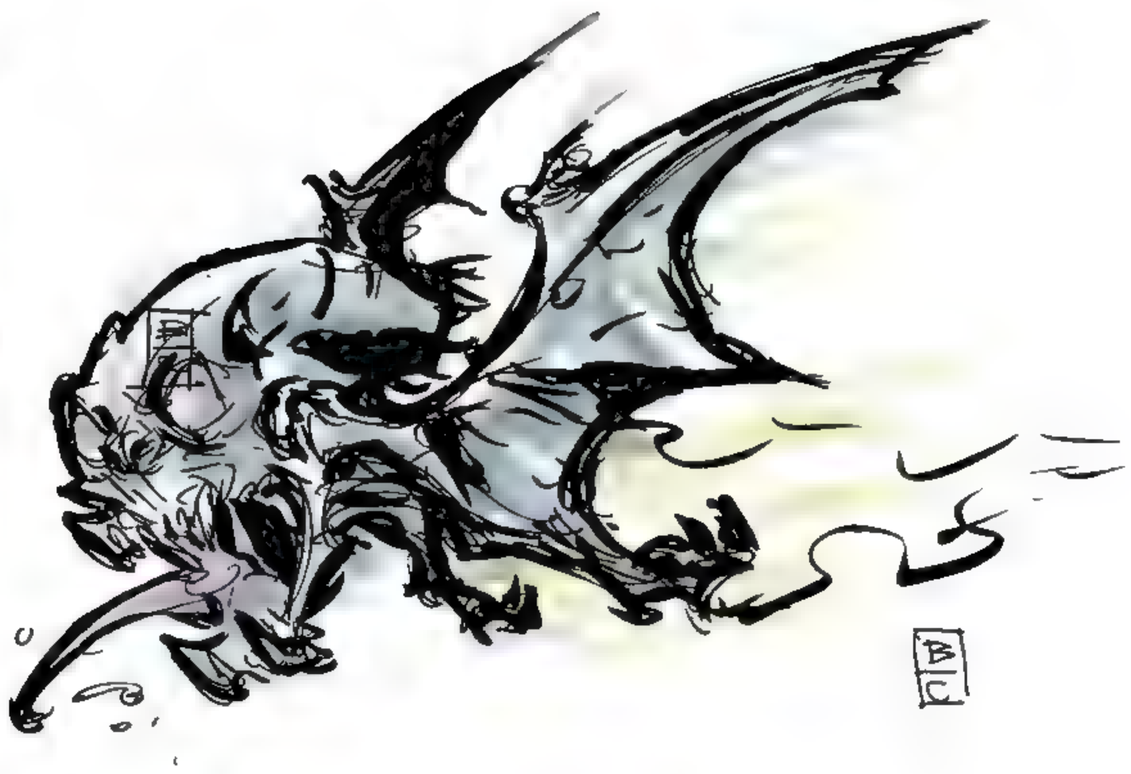
Opposite: Buffy Season 9 #15 final variant cover art. Pencils by Georges Jeanty, inks by Dexter Vines, and colors by Michelle Madsen.

Following pages: Buffy Season 9 Volume 3: *Guarded* cover art by Jo Chen. *Willow: Wonderland* #1 variant cover by Megan Lara.

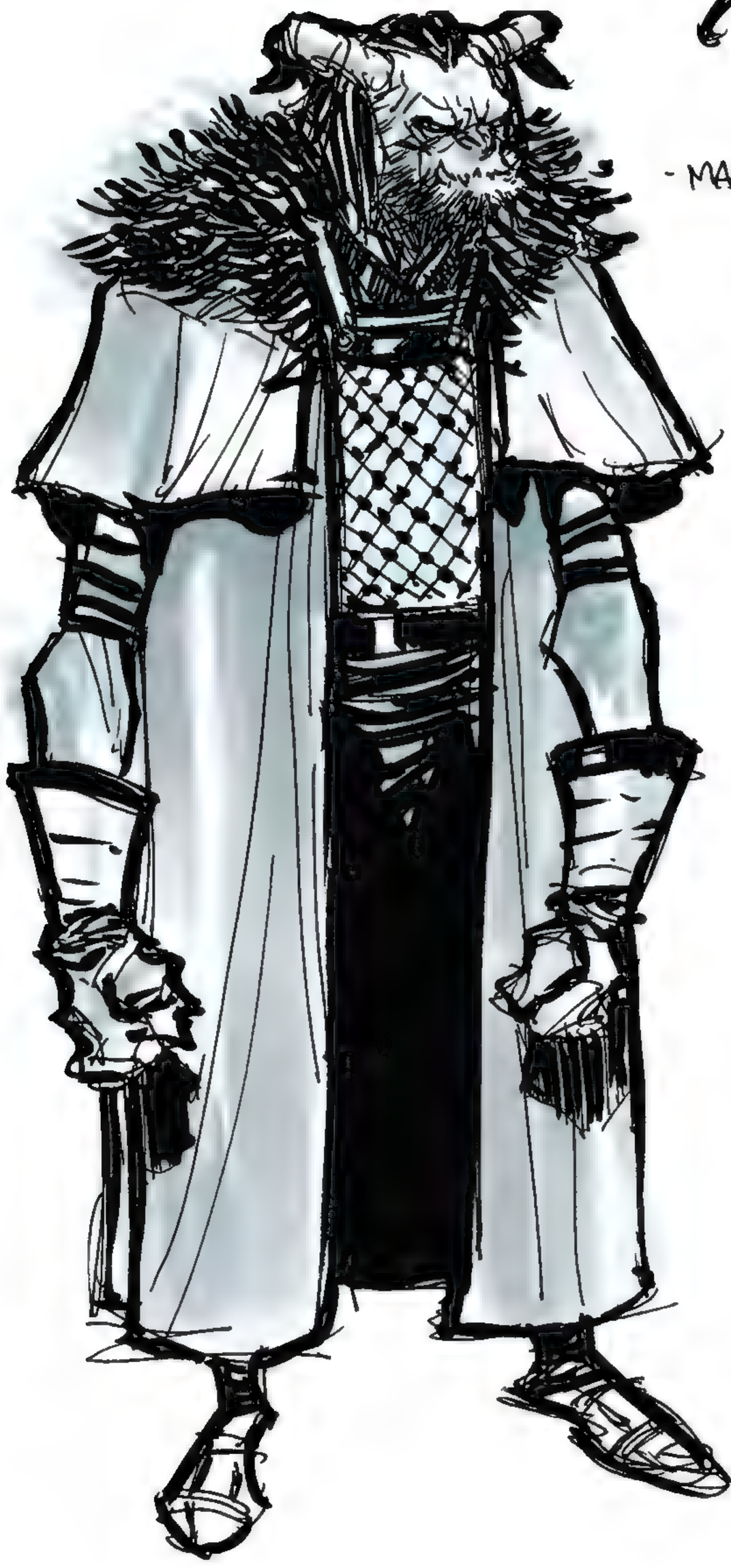
39
TROLLEY
GEORGES

Brian Ching's initial sketches of Willow, along with likeness tryouts for Dawn, Buffy, and Angel.

- DAWN -



- MARRAK -



More sketches from Brian Ching: at top left, the concept for the ground monster that Willow and Rack encounter; at top right, the winghead; and above, the concepts for the cursed monster form of Rack (Marrak) and his true human form.

Willow: Wonderland #1 variant cover created for New York Comic Con by Jenny Frison.

Costume designs for Willow by Brian Ching. He created an array of outfits to carry her through the evolving landscape in *Wonderland*.

Opposite: Willow: Wonderland #2 variant cover by Megan Lara.

FROM THE PAGES OF BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER

2.99

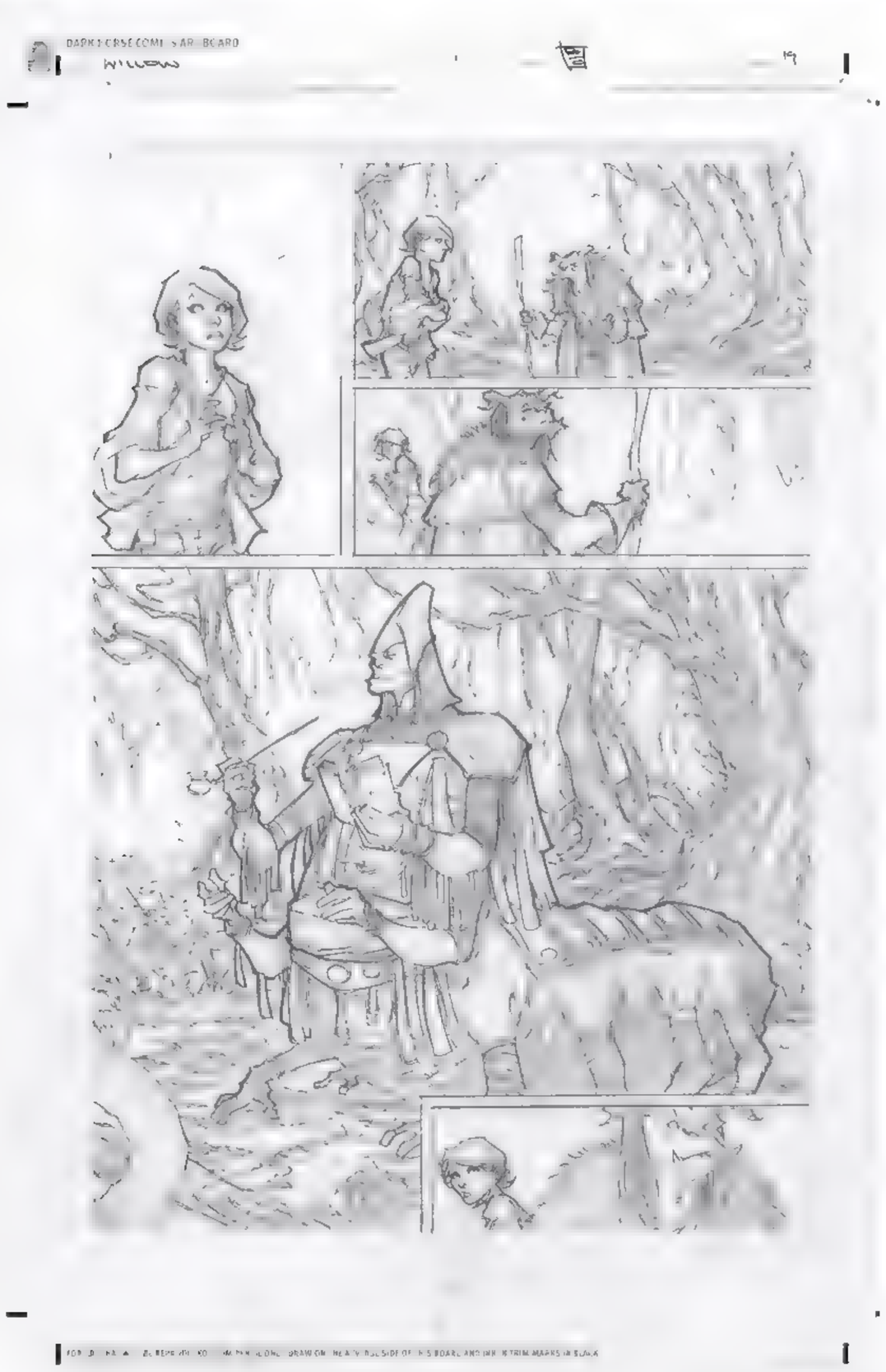
BUFFY

WONDERLAND

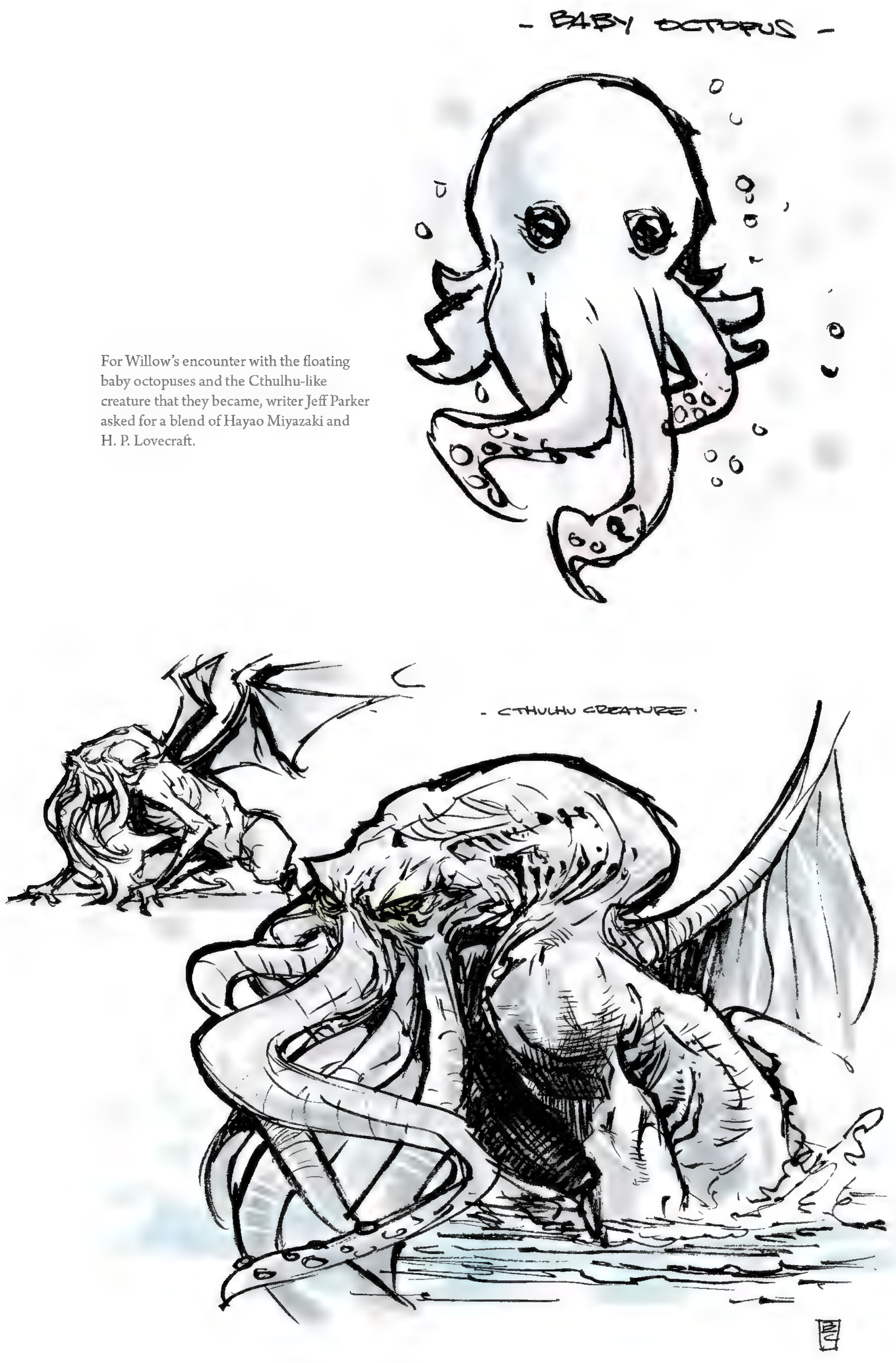
Pencils and inks for *Willow: Wonderland* #1, page 10. Pencils by Brian Ching, inks by Jason Gorder. The pencils for panel 3 of this page, showing Willow's research and the beginning of her quest, were so perfectly expository that our designer chose to feature them on the credits page for the comics issues.

Opposite: Pencils and inks for *Willow: Wonderland* #1, pages 18 and 19. Pencils by Brian Ching and inks by Jason Gorder.

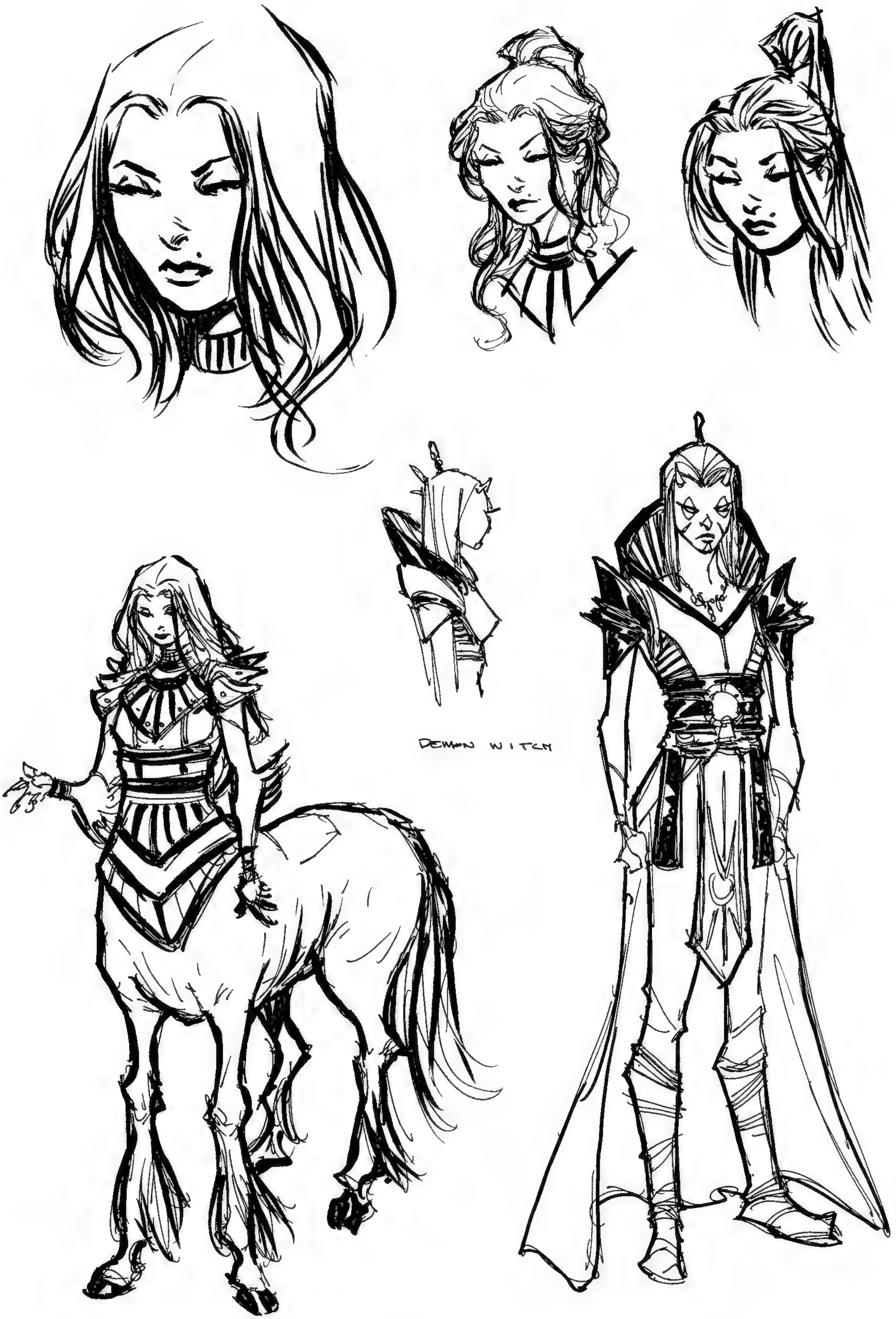
DARK HORSE COMICS ART BOARD
WILLOW
18


DARK HORSE COMICS ART BOARD
WILLOW
19

The caterpillar, one of the earliest characters that Brian created for the first dimension Willow visited, went through many sketches before the final version was decided upon.



For Willow's encounter with the floating baby octopuses and the Cthulhu-like creature that they became, writer Jeff Parker asked for a blend of Hayao Miyazaki and H. P. Lovecraft.



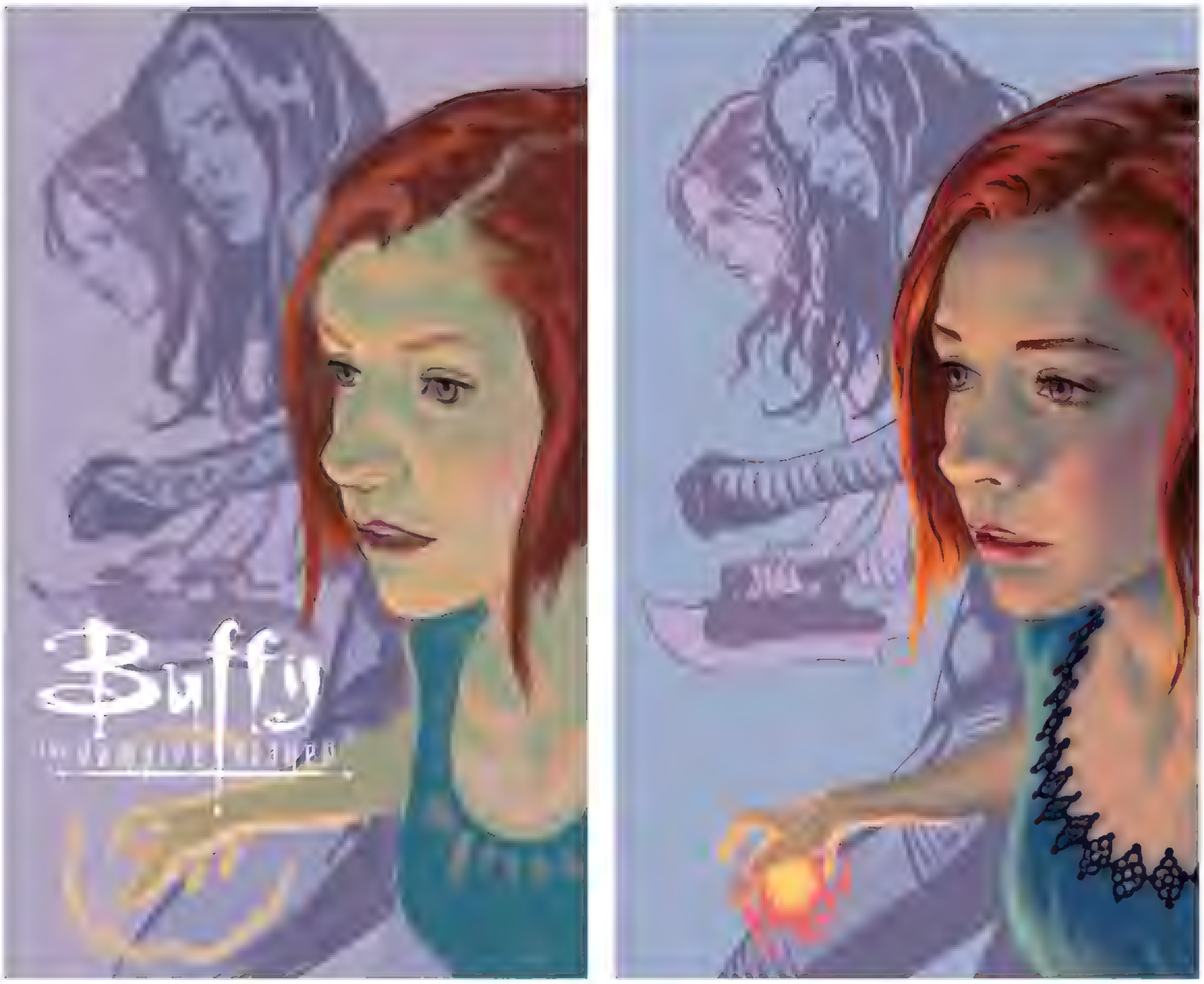
Following a trail to one source of magic, Willow finds and reunites with her lost love, Aluwyn, and joins a coven of witches. These pages highlight some of the many distinctive forms of witches from many different worlds.

VULCAN

Willow went through many costume changes throughout this story. When it came to her swimming scene, Brian worked through several sketches for Willow's swimsuit. And as Willow spent more time with the coven, she left behind the new, trendy style she had adopted at the beginning of Season 9 and reverted to her previous Wiccan-inspired style.

Willow: Wonderland #3 variant cover by Megan Lara.

Following pages: Willow: Wonderland #4 and #5 variant covers by Megan Lara.



Cover artist Steve Morris, best known for his work on *Angel & Faith* Season 9 and *Buffy* Season 10, took on cover duties for all of the Season 9 Library Editions. Here is a glimpse of his process.

Above, left: His earliest sketch, with logo mockup.

Above, right: A tighter image of Buffy, Illyria, and Willow. We then realized that Illyria doesn't appear in this story arc and swapped her out for Kennedy. (Oops!)

Above, left: Nearly complete. We now have Kennedy in place, but she has the wrong lower body.

Above, right: If you look closely at all of the images you can see the subtle changes in the characters' hair, the rendering on their faces, and Willow's eye color. This was the last image before Steve finalized it by adding a starscape in the background, as shown on the front of this very book.

CREATOR BIOGRAPHIES

Writer, producer, and director JOSS WHEDON began writing feature films and acting as a "script doctor" in the 1990s. He introduced the character for which he is most well known in his script for the original *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* film (1992).

In 1997 Whedon founded Mutant Enemy Productions so that he could coproduce the television series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. The series ran from 1997 to 2003, giving birth to Whedon's cultlike fan following, and led to a spinoff series, *Angel*, as well as comics series based on both shows. In 2002, Whedon produced and wrote the television series *Firefly*, which eventually led to a feature film titled *Serenity* (2005), as well as more comics. In 2008, Whedon produced and cowrote, with his brothers Zack and Jed Whedon, and Maurissa Tancharoen, the Emmy-winning online series *Dr. Horrible's Sing-Along Blog*—again leading to a comics series. His most recently produced television work, *Dollhouse*, created with Jed Whedon and Tancharoen, premiered in 2009. He wrote and directed one of the most ambitious and successful feature films to date: *The Avengers*, based on the Marvel Comics superhero team, and is currently at work on the sequel, *Avengers: Age of Ultron*. He also directed, produced, and composed original music for a film adaptation of the Shakespeare play *Much Ado about Nothing*.

Comics written by Whedon include *Fray* and *Buffy* Seasons 8 and 9, both series based in the *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* universe, and *Sugarshock*, all for Dark Horse Comics, and *Runaways* and *Astonishing X-Men* for Marvel Comics.

Writer and producer ANDREW CHAMBLISS began his career as an assistant to the executive producers of the television series *Crossing Jordan* and *Heroes*, after which he worked as a story editor on the short-lived remake of *The Bionic Woman*. In 2011 he joined the writing staff of *Dollhouse* and continued as writer and story editor, scripting the series finale, "Epitaph Two: Return," as well as cowriting the comic-book series with Jed Whedon and Maurissa Tancharoen at Dark Horse Comics. He has also written for *Spartacus: Blood and Sand* and *The Vampire Diaries*, and currently works on the staff of *Once Upon a Time* as a writer and coproducer. Chambliss was the primary writer for Season 9 of the *Buffy* comics series and has stated that *Buffy* was instrumental in making him want to become a writer.

Best known as a writer and producer for a variety of science-fiction television series, JANE ESPENSON first attempted to enter the field by submitting several spec scripts to *Star Trek: The Next Generation* while she was a graduate student at University of California–Berkeley. In 1992 she was given a spot in the Disney Writing Fellowship, which led to work on ABC's *Dinosaurs* and Touchstone Television's *Monty*. From there, in 1997, she became a writer and producer for the sitcom *Ellen*. A year later, Espenson applied for a position on *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, and became executive story editor in the show's third season. Espenson remained with the show through its final (seventh) season. She wrote or cowrote twenty-three episodes; "Conversations with Dead People," cowritten with Drew Goddard, won a 2003 Hugo Award. *Buffy* also brought Espenson to the comics world. She wrote several stories for Dark Horse Comics' *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* series and the related comics *Tales of the Slayers* and *Tales of the Vampires*. After *Buffy*, Espenson wrote and produced for a variety of TV series, including *Firefly*, *The O.C.*, *Gilmore Girls*, *Tru Calling*, and *Jake in Progress*, before joining the staff of Syfy's *Battlestar Galactica* remake in its fourth season as co-executive producer. She remained with the series through the remainder of its episodes and two television movies, and then took on executive producer duties for the spinoff, *Caprica*. While working on *Battlestar*, Joss Whedon's *Dollhouse*, *Caprica*, and other series, she returned to the world of comics with *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* Season 8. In 2011, Espenson joined ABC's new series *Once Upon a Time* as consulting producer and writer, and is still currently with the program. Also in 2011, Espenson launched her first independent web series with cocreator Brad Bell, *Husbands*. The critically acclaimed and award-winning series has run for two seasons, and led to the creation of an inventive six-part comics series written by Espenson and Bell and published by Dark Horse.

Writer and producer DREW Z. GREENBERG has worked on some of the biggest science-fiction properties in the world of pop culture, including *Arrow*, *Dexter*, *Smallville*, *Firefly*, *Warehouse 13*, *Star Wars: The Clone Wars*, and of course *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. He served as story editor for *Buffy*'s final television season as well as writing many of the major fan-favorite episodes of the show, providing scripts for the unproduced *Buffy* animated series, and contributing to the *Buffy* comics series. He got degrees in political science and law before deciding to try his hand at becoming a television scriptwriter, and on the strength of a *Buffy* spec script was hired as a member of the Mutant Enemy production team. Greenberg currently coproduces *Marvel's Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.*

Buffy the Vampire Slayer Season 8 and Season 9 series artist GEORGES JEANTY studied fine arts at Miami Dade University; the pursuit of a career in comics was a logical choice for his artistic talents. In 1993 he broke into the world of comics with *Paradigm* #1 from Caliber Comics, and soon was penciling for London Night Studios. Moving to Atlanta, Georgia, in 1994, Jeanty joined Gaijin Studios and began to work regularly for DC Comics on titles such as *Green Lantern*, *Superboy*, and *Superman*. His first ongoing series came in 1999 with Marvel Comics' *Bishop: The Last X-Man*, and was followed by work on *Gambit*, *Deadpool*, and *Weapon X*. In 2003, Jeanty left Gaijin Studios and formed Studio Revolver with fellow artists Dexter Vines, Tom Feister, and Tariq Hassan. The year 2006 brought Jeanty the critically acclaimed comics miniseries *The American Way*, a controversial sixties-era series written by screenwriter John Ridley and released through WildStorm. Soon after the success of *The American Way*, Jeanty was approached by Dark Horse Comics to be the regular series artist for *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* Season 8—for which he had been handpicked by Joss Whedon. Georges Jeanty's run as the artist for Season 8 was critically acclaimed, and the series received the 2008 Eisner Award for Best New Series. Jeanty continued as the regular series artist for *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* Season 9, and recently was the artist for the series *Serenity: Firefly Class 03-K64—Leaves on the Wind*.

Best known for his work in the *Buffy* universe, comic artist KARL MOLINE's first project with series creator Joss Whedon was the 2003 miniseries *Fray*, from Dark Horse Comics, set in the future of Buffy's world. With the canonical return of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* in comics with Season 8, Moline was again brought in to draw a *Buffy/Fray* crossover arc in issues #16–#19, as well as a Season 8 *Willow* one-shot, a *Riley* one-shot, and single issues in *Buffy* Seasons 9 and 10. His other work for Dark Horse includes a *B.P.R.D.: War on Frogs* one-shot in 2008 and the miniseries *B.P.R.D.: The Dead Remembered* in 2011. Moline has also done work for other comics publishers, such as Marvel Comics (including *Avengers Academy*, *The Loners: The Secret Lives of Super Heroes*, *Spider-Man Unlimited*, *X-Factor*, and *X-Men*).

JEFF PARKER is a comics writer and artist. He got his start in the industry in the early 1990s as an artist for now-defunct comics publishers like Malibu and Caliber Comics, moving on to the self-published, standalone graphic novel *The Interman*. Parker has gone on to success as a writer for Marvel titles such as *X-Men: First Class*, *The Hulk*, and *Agents of Atlas*, as well as the ongoing web comic *Bucko* with Erika Moen and the graphic novel *Underground* with Steve Lieber. He lives in Portland, Oregon.

Artist BRIAN CHING decided on a career in comics after being dissatisfied in his second year of a biology degree in college. A regular doodler, he took art classes, which he found much more personally fulfilling, graduating with a BA in studio art from the University of California at Irvine. He is best known for his work in *Star Wars* comics for Dark Horse, including the series *Knights of the Old Republic*, the Episode III prequel *Star Wars: Obsession*, and the comics adaptation of the video game *The Force Unleashed*. He has also done art for *Conan the Avenger* as well as some of the comics industry's other most popular characters in *Iron Man: Kiss and Kill*, *Chaos War: Thor*, and *Batman: Arkham Unhinged*. He lives in Los Angeles with his wife, Lisa.

BILLY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER: Script, part 1, by Jane Espenson; script, part 2, by Drew Z. Greenberg; pencils, pages 79–100 and 103–113, by Karl Moline; pencils, pages 114–124, by Ben Dewey with assistance from Karl Moline

WILLOW: WONDERLAND: Script, parts 1 and 2, by Jeff Parker; script, part 3, by Jeff Parker & Christos Gage; script, parts 4 and 5, by Christos Gage & Jeff Parker

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This volume reprints *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* Season 9 #11–#15 and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer: Willow—Wonderland* #1–#5.

Willow: Wonderland takes place after the events of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* Season 9 #5 and *Angel & Faith* #14.

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BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER SEASON 9 LIBRARY EDITION VOLUME 2
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Buffy the Vampire Slayer™

SEASON 9 VOLUME 2

WHAT IS A SLAYER'S PLACE IN A WORLD WITHOUT MAGIC?

Recruited by ex-Slayer Kennedy, Buffy is gainfully employed by a newly formed company leasing out former Slayers as bodyguards. A Slayer to her core, Buffy struggles to resist her instincts of fighting demons and vampires. Luckily for Buffy, her first assignment has her protecting an Internet mogul chased by assassins from the hell dimensions!

As the zompire epidemic continues to spread through the world, a small California town is overrun by this insurmountable threat just as a new kind of Slayer—inspired by Buffy's strength and her fight against evil—steps up to be a hero . . .

Meanwhile, Willow Rosenberg struggles to reclaim her identity and magic in a quest that leads her to strange new worlds where she'll confront bizarre beasts and reunite with familiar faces. Somehow, against all odds, she must return magic to her world as she confronts her most fearsome foe to date—herself.

"Espenson, Moline, and company have turned out a comic to be proud of . . . it's turned the book into one where I'm eager to see what happens next. All in all, a good show by all parties involved."

—COMIC BOOK RESOURCES

"I'm curious to see Willow continue to take the lead in her own story for a change."

—*WIRED*

"This is one of the funniest and most enjoyable *Buffy* reads yet. It's very bright, techy, and geeky without trying and something that will put a nice kick in your day."

—COMICS GRINDER

"Awesome art, great coloring, and clever wit."

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SEASON 9 VOLUME 2

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"*Willow* is smart, powerful, and very sexy. The interior artwork is excellent."

—TECHNORATI

In an effort to give disenfranchised Slayers a meaningful societal role—with pay—Kennedy recruits Buffy to act as a bodyguard for high-profile clientele. But unlike the other recruits, Buffy struggles to abandon her Slaying instincts and looks for demon threats where none lie. Luckily for Buffy, her first job is to protect a tech mogul who just happens to be running from hell-dimension assassins!

While Buffy and other Slayers shift focus away from vampires, the zompire epidemic is spreading across the world. In a small California town about to be overrun, a new kind of Slayer is revealed.

Armed with Buffy's broken scythe, Willow has begun a quest to, against all odds, bring magic back to earth. She must keep her darkest self at bay while she battles demons—the scaly and horned type as well as her own.

Acclaimed writers **Andrew Chambliss** (*Once Upon a Time*), **Jeff Parker** (*X-Men*), **Jane Espenson** (*Husbands, Once Upon a Time*), **Drew Z. Greenberg** (*Warehouse 13*), and **Christos Gage** (*Angel & Faith*), along with artists **Brian Ching** (*Star Wars*) and **Georges Jeanty** (*Serenity: Leaves on the Wind*), craft powerful tales of zompire epidemics, self-discovery, new relationships, and magic lost—and found again in unexpected places.

"Excited to see what happens next. This is the sort of writing I like to see about my favorite Slayer."

—COMIC BOOK RESOURCES

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SON OF ULTRON

"THIS FAN... THIS MONSTER!"